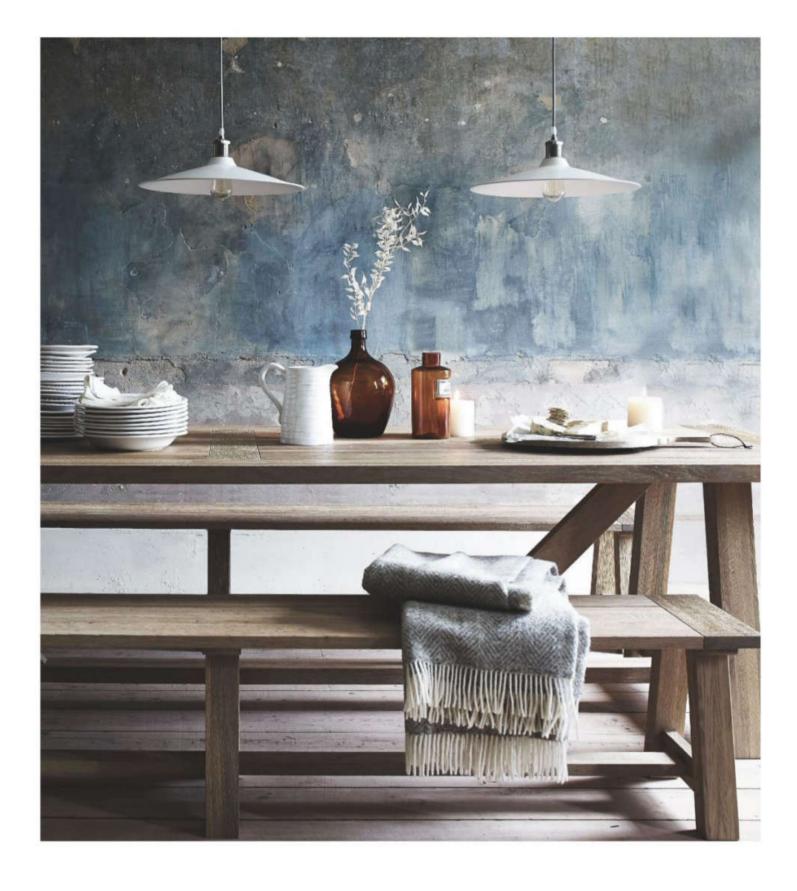
# **COUNTRY HOMES**



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# Country homes

- HAMPSHIRE MILL HOUSE A wreath on the door and twinkling candlelight inside signal a stylish Christmas in this quirky Hampshire home
- SURREY COUNTRY HOUSE 32 There's great excitement as this family awaits Christmas - and the house is dressed to thrill
- NORFOLK COTTAGE Modern country decorations create a crisp, clean festive feel in this pared-back East Anglian home
- 48 • NORTH YORKSHIRE CONVERSION A former stable provides the ideal venue for cosy family present openings on Christmas morning PLUS GET-THE-LOOK **IDEAS FOR EVERY HOME**

# Interiors & inspiration

- 10 DECEMBER The jewel-bright things we can't live without
- 15 HOME NOTES
- **58** • THE GIFT OF HOME Decorate with modern traditions this Christmas time
- GET SET, DECORATE! Deck the home with twinkly fairylights, playful baubles and trendy wreaths and garlands
- THE COUNTRY DECORATOR Stylish ways to stack and store log piles for winter warmth

# Creative crafts

• JUST-FOR-YOU GIFTS Make personalised presents

# Home improvements

93 • PROJECTS, PLANS & DREAMS Guest bedrooms, warming stoves and ovens for entertaining >>



• ON THE COVER





# Seasonal food

- 19 FOOD NOTES
- 132 DELICIOUSLY CHRISTMASSY
  Cookies, cakes and tarts freshly
  baked in the oven it's what a
  country Christmas is all about

# Lifestyle

- 20 OUT & ABOUT
- 86 MY KIND OF COUNTRY
  Food writer and entrepreneur
  Romilla Arber loves the
  celebrations in rural Hampshire
- 10 WAYS TO MAKE

  LIFE LOVELY Happy thoughts

  and ideas for fashion, eco,

  travel and more
- MY COUNTRY BUSINESS
  Lisa Wright paints vintage-style
  baubles from her cottage in the
  Buckinghamshire countryside
- 162 MY FAVOURITE VIEW Dr Anna Keay, Director of the Landmark Trust, is transported by the winter beauty of Argyll



- 16 GARDEN NOTES
- 114 UNDER A LAYER OF SNOW

  This stately garden near the
  Lammermuir Hills glistens
  under a light dusting of snow

# Just for you

- 56 SUBSCRIBE TO COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS
- READER OFFERS Italian lakes, Venice and Verona; Nutriblend blender from only \$49.99
- 129 SAVE 20% AT MARGO SELBY Beautiful wool throws, cushions and rugs for your home
- 148 READER OFFERS Christmas plants for indoor colour and scent; 50% off 12 bottles of red wine (and one Prosecco free)

# Regulars

- 8 LOVE OUR WORLD
- 113 COMING NEXT MONTH
- 149 SHOPPING DIRECTORY
  All the contact details and
  websites featured in this issue



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• ON THE COVER

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# OUNTRY HOMES

Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 OSU Telephone 020 3148 5000 Email countryhomes@timeinc.com

EDITOR

### Rhoda Parry

DEPUTY EDITOR Jane Akers 020 3148 7313

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Emma Williams 020 3148 7184

HOUSES EDITOR

Vivienne Ayers 020 3148 7194

SHOPPING EDITOR

**Holly Phillips** 020 3148 7195

STYLE WRITER

Tara King 020 3148 7196

STYLE ASSISTANT

Rosanna Johnson 020 3148 7197

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Columba Colivet 020 3148 7190

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Sara Bird (Style); Sarah Wilson (Food and People)

CHIEF SUB EDITOR

Anne Esden 020 3148 7188

SENIOR SUB EDITORS

Ruth Farnsworth 020 3148 7189;

Marian McNamara 020 3148 7192; Susan Shepherd 020 3148 7187

ART EDITOR

Meredith Davies 020 3148 7186

SENIOR DESIGNER

Christina McQuillan 020 3148 7899

DESIGNER

Stephanie Allingham 020 3148 7898

EDITORIAL PRODUCTION MANAGER

Nicola Tillman 020 3148 7891

ART PRODUCTION DESIGNER Chris Saggers 020 3148 7896

### MARKETING

Marketing Manager Alison Watson 020 3148 7685

### PUBLISHING

Managing Director Fiona Dent 020 3148 5651 PA to Managing Director Lizzie Shepperson 020 3148 5651 Publishing Director Yvonne Ramsden 020 3148 7311 Assistant to Publishing Director Vera Purbrick 020 3148 7311 Publisher Belinda Cooper 020 3148 7666

Head of Client Partnerships Alex Russell 020 3148 7570

### PRODUCTION

Group Production Manager Steve Twort 020 3148 5439 Production Manager Alan Taylor 020 3148 5441 Issue Planner/Production Designer Nicholas Liermann 020 3148 3719 Digital Producer Andrew Howe 020 3148 3366

### CIRCULATION

Circulation Manager Paul Burden 020 3148 3454

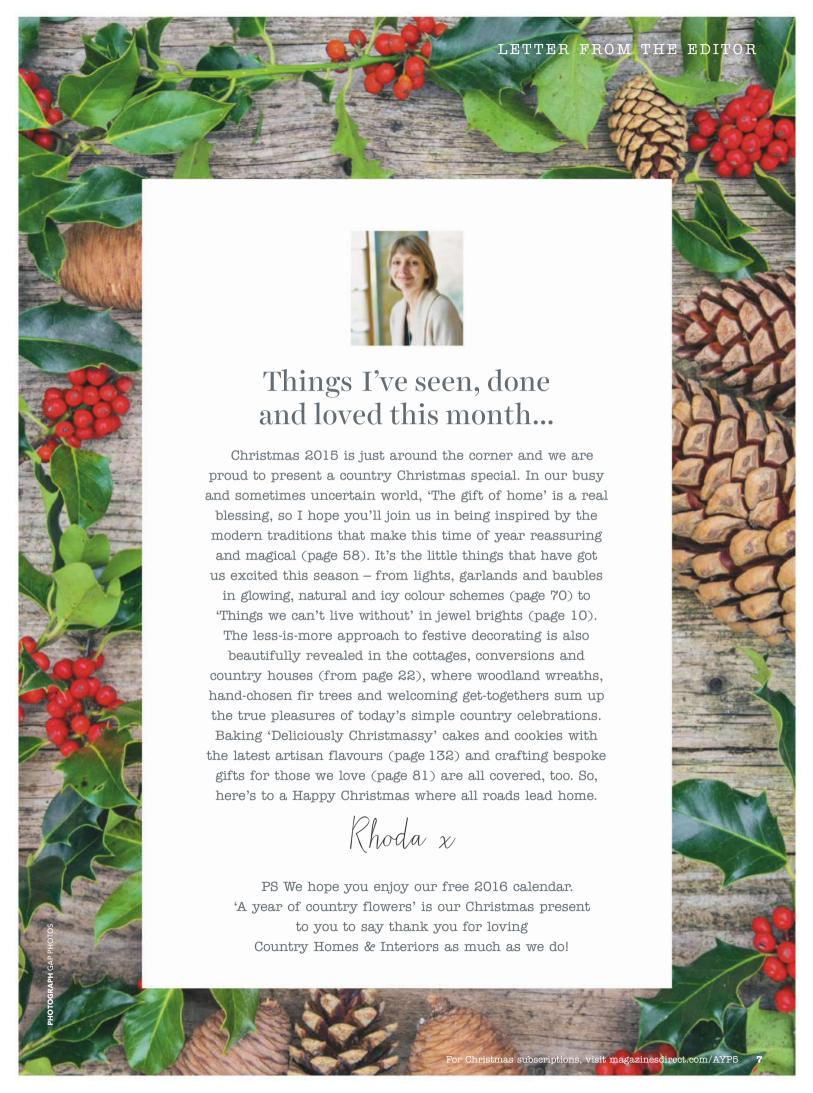
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Commercial Director Joanne O'Hara 020 3148 7642 PA to Commercial Director Lucienne Watson 020 3148 7641 Advertisement and London Sales Manager Ruth Roscorla 020 3148 7639 Senior Account Manager Nancy Phillips 020 3148 7640 International/Luxury Account Manager Carole Bunce 020 3148 7620 Head of Agency Sales Lindsay Dean 020 3148 3668 Digital Client Manager Amy McKean 020 3148 7590 Head of Classified Sales Howard Jones 020 3148 2535 Group Classified Manager Emma van der Veen 020 3148 2635 Subscriptions Marketing Manager Diane Hornby 020 3148 6295 Creative Media Director Matt Downs 020 3148 3681

Projects Director Hannah Spice 020 3148 3623 Creative Media Manager Sue Valentine 020 3148 7630 Sales Manager (Inserts) Canopy Media Lindsay Martin 020 7611 8151

# Assistant Syndication Manager Efi Mandrides 020 3148 5485 REGIONAL ADVERTISING

Regional Sales Director Katrina Hutchison 0161 601 3720 Group Head (Inserts) Amanda Dean 0161 601 3725



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- Pin our favourite things: pinterest.com/ countryhomesmag







1 Fun Scandi-inspired decorative objects. Wooden stag head sculpture, H36xW25xD9cm, £22, Very.
2 A comfy chair to relax in after Christmas lunch.
Rochelle French armchair, H87xW72xD70cm, £295, Within Home. 3 Pulling a festive cracker with a fruity theme.
Midwinter Fruits crackers, £12 for 6, John Lewis.

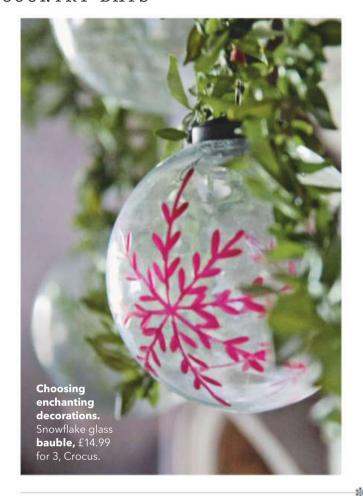






**4 Luxurious soft furnishings in rich colours.** Large velvet cushions, £35 each, Berry Red. **5 Hanging up a rustic wreath.** Pinecone wreath, £55, Cox & Cox. **6 Candlelight silhouettes dancing on the wall.** Walther & Co Zinc Houses, £17.95 (small); £54 (large), The Scandinavian Shop. **7 Getting out decadent baubles.** Handpainted decoration, £5, Marks & Spencer. **>>** 

# COUNTRY DAYS





8 A portable table that doubles as a mulled wine station. Zinc tray table, £80, Design Vintage. 9 Pouring a tipple from colourful glassware. Birds Of Paradise crystal decanter, £125, Gurasu at Not on the High Street. 10 Cute folklore-inspired motifs. Cushion, £19.50, Marks & Spencer. 11 A warm rug beneath our feet. Courtyard Vintage rug by Safavieh, from £141, Wayfair.



**12 A subscription to our favourite magazine.** Country Homes & Interiors subscription, from £28.99, magazinesdirect.com/AYQ5. 13 A richly-coloured stocking brimming with gifts. Scented stocking, £8.95, Highgrove. 14 Customising Christmas. Merry Christmas personalised heart slate, £16.95, Pippins Gift Company. 15 Giving presents the perfect finishing touch. Velvet ribbons, from £4 for 5m, Squeak Gift & Party at Not on the High Street.



# Colour of THE MOMENT

GET WRAPPED UP WITH THIS SEASON'S BLEND OF BRIGHT JEWELLED COLOURS MIXED WITH NEUTRAL, RUSTIC TONES FOR PRESENTS THAT LOOK TOO GOOD TO OPEN.



Hemsmak string, £5 for 3 rolls, Ikea. Velvet ribbons, from £4 for 5m, Squeak Gift & Party at Not on the High Street. Mini pegs and labels, £3 for 10, Talking Tables. Elderberry gift wrap, £1.65 a sheet, Emily Burningham. Brown gift wrap, similar from £3, Paperchase. Purple gift wrap, £3.50 a sheet, Liberty. Grosgrain ribbons, £3 a roll, Peach Blossom. Brown Christmas tree gift wrap, £5 for 4 assorted patterns, Ikea. Pink recycled paper gift tag, £3 for 20, Pipii. Grey gift tag, £3 for 10, Peach Blossom. Wiltshire pink berry gift wrap, £3.95 a sheet, Liberty. Dew drop baubles, £18.95 for 12, Nkuku. Kraft gift box, £3.25, Paperchase. Purple crinkle paper shredding, £4, Peach Blossom. Framstalla pink ribbon, £1.25 for 4 rolls, Ikea. Pink gift wrap, £2.25 a roll, Paperchase. (Background) Andrew Martin Timber wallpaper, £77.90 a roll, John Lewis. Scissors, bobbins, stylist's own.



# HEAL'S Good design. Well made.

INTRODUCING

# The Pinner Collection

The Pinner collection was inspired by Ambrose Heal's clean aesthetic and the desire to create furniture fit for a family – it's hardworking, durable and beautiful too.

Pinner dining chair in blue  $\pounds 395$  for a pair, Pinner round dining table in blue  $\pounds 975$ , shown with Adelaide pendant lights from  $\pounds 155$ .

www.heals.com

# Home notes

# We want this now ...



This freestanding pantry is both beautiful and perfect for Christmas. Made from beech, it has spacious shelves, drawers and adjustable bottle storage, plus a handy chalkboard, and comes in seven country-inspired shades including cranberry (left). £2,350, Laura Ashley.

# our favourite designer Vicky White

Vicky is the founder of British homewares and lifestyle brand Plum & Ashby, known for its iconic designs inspired by unofficial mascot Bertie, her Wirehaired Fox Terrier.

**How did Plum & Ashby** come about? I couldn't find anything that fitted both my city flat and the rural cottage I'd just bought in Bedfordshire, so I decided to create products that had a timeless country look but without a hint of floral! Describe your design **process.** I based my brand on the old concept of a general store - a place you would visit to get everything you need, that will work well together and tell a story. My team and I use Pinterest to create endless boards filled with everything from leather pouches to cushions. Then we sit down together and decide on final product design and packaging. How do you choose your manufacturers? I like

design and packaging.

How do you choose your manufacturers? I like working with small British companies. Each one has a unique story, for example, our cushions are hand-knitted by a group of ladies in Devon who gather and natter with cups of tea! We make sure everything



we produce comes from somewhere that we're proud to be associated with. What inspires you? My cottage, the countryside and antique finds, along with Bertie, too, of course! What's your favourite festive piece? I love our take on a Christmas candle (Advent candle, £26.50, above). The scent is truly captivating - mulled wine, spiced orange and sweet berries. We've designed a sweet label, so you can cross out the days of Advent, too! **Describe your creative** style in three words. British, traditional and

F

charming.
For further details, visit plumand ashby.co.uk or call 020 8988 5222.



# Love a festive front door

Forget bringing the outside in, it's all about outdoor decorating this Christmas. We're dressing porches, doorways and front gardens with foraged foliage and rustic touches for festive kerb appeal that oozes country style. Natural materials, such as wood and hessian, complement the open-air surroundings, while homemade garlands and wreaths adorned with mistletoe and cinnamon sticks welcome all. A generous Nordic pine provides greenery on which to hang appropriate ornaments: cottage garden-inspired tree decorations, including watering cans, wheelbarrows and pails, sit beautifully with silver baubles and frosted pine cones for a subtle touch of sparkle.



# The perfect present

Enjoy the magic of winter with stylist and author Selina Lake's book, Winter Living (£19.99, Ryland Peters & Small). Full of style tips and craft ideas, it covers atmospheric trends inspired by the season, from homespun charm to faded grandeur.

The ultimate eco garden accessory, this beautiful broom is made from fallen coconut leaves, coir and coconut shells. You can use it in all weather conditions either as a rake or broom, and even to sweep up snow and pine needles. £25, The Original Garden Broom.

# OUR FAVOURITE PLANT EXPERT

Carol Klein

Writer, TV presenter and horticulturalist Carol Klein is one of the UK's best-loved gardening experts. Her latest book, Making a Garden (£25, Mitchell Beazley) will inspire you to think about your garden in a new way.

Does your garden play a part in your Christmas festivities? We have a lot of evergreens and berries growing so we like to collect these to make beautiful holly wreaths.

What are you up to in your garden at the moment? I'm drawing up plans to extend the garden into the field next door.

What should we be doing in the garden on a **December day?** Hopefully admiring your Christmas roses (Helleborus niger). My mum gave me one that her dad had given to her before that. It always flowers in time for the Christmas holidays. If you can't be in the garden, you could start planning next year's vegetable crops.

What do you have lined up for 2016? With any luck, I'll be presenting some of the TV coverage of the Hampton Court Palace



Flower Show and be back on Gardeners' World. I'm also hoping that there will be another series of Carol Klein's Plant Odysseys.

Will we be seeing you at Chelsea again next year? I sincerely hope so! I love Chelsea and I haven't missed it for 25 years! Did any plants you saw at

Chelsea make it back to your garden this year? Loads! Hoved the irises Sarah Cook reintroduced from a strain of Cedric Morris's vintage irises, bred in his Suffolk garden 60 years ago. Sarah has



managed to collect around 25 of these Morris varieties



# Christmas tree favourites

Nothing says Christmas quite like a real tree, but which variety should you choose? Norway spruce has that pungent Christmassy scent and upwardtilting branches but, in a warm room, it will drop needles. Most popular is Nordmann fir, which has a good shape and scent, nice open branches and holds its needles. Noble fir also has a lovely symmetrical shape and holds its needles well. If you opt for a cut tree, choose one with plenty of bare trunk so you can take a slice off the bottom when you get home (in its stand, in water, it will take up water more efficiently). A container-grown 'living tree' will have its own roots and pot, so, if you're lucky, it can be used year after year.

### WINTER WONDER



They say there's a variety of clematis in flower every month of the year. December's star is Clematis cirrhosa 'Jingle Bells', a pretty climber with delicately scented white flowers. £16.99 for a 2L pot, Waitrose Garden.

# Experience a degree of darkness...







Allow the intense taste of Excellence to take you to another place and experience the ultimate pleasure.

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# the Ultimate range.

Adj: 1. not to be improved upon or surpassed; greatest; unsurpassed: the ultimate in range cooking 2. Rangemaster [since 1830]



# When it comes to cooking; experience matters.

Two, vast oven cavities, 5 zone induction or gas hob, glide-out grill and exclusive bread proving drawer; the Rangemaster NEXUS offers 110cm of range cooking perfection.

Built from 185 years of market leading experience, the NEXUS tops the range of Britain's finest. Don't just take our word for it; Rangemaster dominates Which? best buys with 9 of the top 11 range cookers, wins countless industry awards and over 1 million customers have already made Rangemaster the heart of their home.

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# FEATURE SARAH WILSON PHOTOGRAPH (DUCK) STOCKFOOD/THOMAS DHELLEMMES

# Food notes

# We want this now ...

Every country kitchen needs a good copper pan and this one is perfect for mulled wine. Put fruit juice and alcohol (try flat cider) in the pan with spices and simmer for 10-15 minutes. Take off the heat and leave to infuse before gently re-heating. Copper stockpot, 24cm, £40, George Home.



# our favourite cheesemonger Hero Hirsh

British Cheesemonger of the Year 2012, Hero Hirsh has worked at Britain's oldest artisan cheese shop since 2009. Paxton & Whitfield began as a cheese stall in 1742 in Aldwych and today has four shops including branches in Bath and Stratford-upon-Avon.

# What's so special about Paxton & Whitfield cheese?

We have a long history in how to care for cheese so when our customers buy it from us it's at its very best.

Tell us how the business started... In 1742 Stephen Cullum set up a cheese stall in Aldwych, London. As the business grew, his son, Sam, moved it to Jermyn Street and took on two partners, Harry Paxton and Charles Whitfield.

Have you won awards? We've won a number of awards including Best British Cheese Counter of the Year at the World

Cheese Awards 2012.

What did the judges say? 'Paxton & Whitfield is one of the most respected cheese retailers in the UK... Our

judges were impressed by



the Jermyn Street shop where cheese is kept in perfect condition while still allowing customers the chance to taste and choose without feeling overawed.

# What would be on your perfect English cheese board for Christmas?

The classic Stilton from Cropwell Bishop Creamery in Nottinghamshire (£24 for 1kg) is a must, as is our own Montgomery's Cheddar (£27 for 1kg), which has a crunchy bite. Plus a tasty, sweet goat's cheese, Bosworth Ash Log (£9.50



for 150g).
For more information, visit paxton and whitfield. co.uk.



# Celebrate with duck

Roasted duck with crispy skin tastes really delicious at Christmas and the fat can be used to take your roast potatoes to another level. For super-crispy skin, first pierce it all over and rinse with plenty of boiling water; pat with a kitchen towel and leave to dry. Add fresh thyme and rosemary to the cavity, or a stuffing recipe of your choice – orange zest and nutmeg work well. Sprinkle liberally with sea salt and roast on a rack over a deep roasting tin to collect the fat for your roast potatoes. Cook according to weight and baste every 20 minutes. Serve with homemade cranberry sauce. Add any leftovers to wraps and stir-fries.



# Caramel like no other

Handmade the artisan way in the West of Ireland, Pandora Bell's confectionery is out of this world. These Chocolate Caramels, made with butter and queen of sea salt Fleur de Sel, have an intense flavour and are already winning awards. We love the cute churn, too. Chocolate Caramels, £12.95 for 200g, Pandora Bell at Amazon.

# Out & about



# Shop at a festive fair

Enjoy a day out and buy gorgeous crafts, gifts and homemade treats to decorate your home and give to friends. Join Country Homes & Interiors at The Country Brocante Winter Fair (above) in West Sussex (Cowdray Park, 28 November), for pop-up stalls and shops offering antiques, French-style gifts, and modern country-style inspiration for the home from British designers and makers, thecountrybrocante.co.uk. Or visit the Selvedge Artisan Fairs in Bath (The American Museum, 12 December) and London (Chelsea Old Town Hall, 3-4 December) for handmade textiles, decorative storage baskets, vintage-inspired sewing patterns and much more, selvedge.org.

# The place to eat ...

Fancy a break from cooking the Christmas dinner this year? Let someone else do the hard work and book a table at Armathwaite Hall, Cumbria. Relax in the Lake View restaurant while you feast on a delicious five-course Christmas Day lunch featuring traditional turkey and all the trimmings. Call 0800 089 3929, prideofbritainhotels.com.



### IT'S A WRAP

Personalise gifts with your own bespoke cards, gift tags and wrapping paper this Christmas. Expert printmaker Rachel Sim will show students how to design beautiful prints on 11 December at West Dean College, West Sussex. The course costs £117 plus materials. Visit westdean.org.uk.

# OUR FAVOURITE SHOP Norpar Barns



Jov Parrish's rustic barn in Essex is the perfect place to source Christmas trees. gifts and decorations.

What inspired you to open Norpar Barns? We started as dried flower growers, but when this lost popularity we decided to diversify. Knowing it would create the perfect atmosphere, we converted a beautiful medieval barn on our farm into our Christmas Barn. We pride ourselves on showcasing a huge range of decorations, from rustic to contemporary, in crisp winter whites through to warm woodland reds and greens, sourced year round from home and abroad. How would you describe the shop's style? As soon as you enter the barn, there's a sense of a Christmas wonderland with whitewashed tongue-and-

grooved walls festooned with vintage ice skates,

toboggans and skis for the full winter experience. Bespoke and Fairtrade decorations make shopping even more special.

What is the range of items like? We have everything you could ever need for Christmas. Baubles in all colours, shapes and textures, wreaths, garlands, lights and candles. There are Christmas food and treats on offer, too, including traditional sweets, cookie kits, jams and pickles.

Any special events? At our Country Christmas Party Weekend on 5 and 6 December visitors can pick up their English Christmas tree and get in the festive mood with mulled punch and sing Christmas carols accompanied by handbell ringers. You can also visit a woodland Father Christmas.

Norpar Barns, Navestock, Romford, Essex RM4 1HA, 01277 374968. norpar.co.uk.







Your decorator's best kept secret...







Your local Brewers could be your decorator's best kept secret. It's where the trade comes to buy a huge range of paints, wallpaper (and even fabrics) that make your home beautiful.

Find out more from your decorator (if you can) or visit **brewers.co.uk** to find your nearest store.







with May in Ali Jackson's Hampshire home is centred around good, but easy, living: delicious food, fine wine, plus friends and family. 'I need to keep everything about Christmas as simple as possible because there's always work to be done here – the horses still need mucking out and feeding, even on Christmas Day, and there are 14 lunch guests to cook for,' says Ali.

With her husband, David, Ali has recently redecorated the mill house that they first tackled 20 years ago. 'When your house is no longer being trampled over by a crowd of excited young children, many people start to take a fresh look at their interiors,' says Ali. 'And by the time our daughter, Anya, turned 18, ours was looking decidedly tired, worn and dated.'

Originally, they had put their stamp on the house by replacing red-brick fireplaces with period stone, changing the position of the stairs and adding a barn-style extension. 'That was our very best design decision,' says Ali. 'It's the part of the house where we now spend most time together. Without it, the house would not have been big enough for us. We made lots of changes as we re-mapped the living spaces to make them work better, but I think we eventually got it right.

'Getting the bare bones correct and updating later was my initial plan, but there usually turns out to be more to re-tweaking than you bargain for because home fashion moves so fast,' says Ali. 'In my new look, patterned wallpapers mainly gave way to paint; colour became more punchy; headings and pelmets were replaced with simple wooden poles, and old-fashioned lamps were out and sleek glass bases in. I also declared out-and-out war on clutter!'

Ali gained decorating experience helping her husband renovate properties for his business, and is particularly good with colour. 'I always find it is best to create a cohesive colour theme for the whole house,' she says. 'Keeping to a limited palette means you can move things around from one room to another.'

She takes a similar practical approach to decorating for Christmas. To make life simple, the tree is always themed in classic red, white, gold and silver. She has her wreath design made up by a local florist, and fresh flowers in tall vases, which allow guests to see each other, adorn the dining table. She wraps wired voile ribbons around glass lanterns in the hallway, and more greenery decorates side tables.

'I also stretch a generous swag of berries and ivy across each mantelpiece,' Ali says. 'In my book, simple bold effects make most impact and I like to stick to the same traditional colours.'

The result is that Ali's home always has a feel-good factor, especially in December, when seasonal fragrances from chunky candles add to the festive mood. 'Christmas would not be the same without the evocative smell of burning logs and spicy candles.' >>>



### AT HOME WITH...

Owners Ali Jackson, co-founder of The Dining Chair Company, and her husband David, a commercial property developer, who live here with daughter Anya, 19. They have three dogs, Sam, a Labrador, Bonnie, a Cocker Spaniel, and Rossie, a West Highland Terrier, and a cat called Lucky, plus they keep horses.

House An 18th-century mill house with a barn-style extension.











What we love most about living here...

'While the surrounding countryside is totally unspoilt, we also live near a vibrant city, and have lots of friends living close by'













Shine a light on statement artwork.
Onedin picture light in Satin Brass,
H18xW37xD14cm, £51, Där Lighting.



Ensure guests are sitting comfortably. William Carver dining chair, £774, The Dining Chair Company.

Be inspired by Ali's



Extending dining table

You can easily invite extra people for lunch as there's plenty of space at these practical tables.

# Need to know...

It's a case of the more the merrier around an extending table. The flexible options have extra leaves that unfold, slide out or slot into place. Often leaves are stored beneath the table top, and a mechanism on runners extends the table. In a tight spot, a drop-leaf table folds away neatly when not required, then one flap or both can be raised to top up dining space. Check in store that runners glide smoothly and hinges are supportive.

### Where to buy...

- Leporello for a painted table for 10.
  - Oka for tables that seat up to 18.
- Raft for a reclaimed teak extending table to seat 12.



**Dress the table.** Robin Reed fill-your-own **crackers,** £15.50 for 8, Selfridges. Pillar **candleholder,** H40cm, £25, Marks & Spencer.

# dining room

# FIND THE PERFECT

STONE FLOOR TILES





Rustic Travertine, £24 sq m;
 Country Mix Tumbled Travertine, £20 sq m;
 Noce Tumbled Travertine, £30 sq m, all Floors of Stone.



Keep the look fine. Gold Band dinner plate, £14, John Lewis. Matte red tealight holder, £9.95 for 3, Nordic House.



Choose tall, slim shapes for table tops. Moorish vase, H80cm, £154, Artisanti. Merle lantern, H81cm, £129, Barker & Stonehouse.





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### AT HOME WITH...

Owners Ashley Nuttall, who is joint owner of interior design business Hudson Homes & Interiors with her sister Abi, and her husband James, who runs a business in London trading commodities. They live here with their children, Oli, 13, and Immy, 10, Darcy the Fox Red Labrador and Lettie the cat.

*House* A six-bedroom country house built in 1924.

really looking forward to Christmas in our house this year,' says Ashley Nuttall. 'The last time we spent it here we had no electricity because of storms and we had to sit in darkness. The Aga went off, so we barbecued the turkey. We're hoping that the celebrations go more smoothly this year!'

The beautiful country house where Ashley, her husband James and their children, Oli and Immy, live has undergone substantial renovation since they moved in nearly 10 years ago. They made the move from London so that their children would enjoy a rural upbringing and plumped for Surrey because James needed to be within commuting distance of London and Ashley grew up there.

'We loved this house when we saw it and, although it was very dated and needed to be brought into the 21st century, I knew what I could do with it,' says Ashley, who has long had a passion for interiors. 'James thought I was slightly mad as it needed a lot of work, but I assured him we could turn it into something lovely. I loved looking at it and imagining how it would be.'

The work was done in phases. 'Before moving in we concentrated on the left-hand side of the house, knocking down walls in the drawing room, moving a chimney breast and updating the plumbing and electrics,' says Ashley. The exterior was made prettier with white render and wall-hung tiles, while back inside bedrooms were decorated and an en-suite dressing room and bathroom added.

The family lived in the house for some time while plans were drawn up for the second phase - a large extension. And, after a >>













number of delays, work was finally started in 2013 and lasted a year. Outbuildings were knocked down and a new kitchen, boot room, pool room, plus bedrooms and bathrooms were built. However, towards the end of the work, Oli had an accident and was hospitalised in Birmingham. 'It makes you very decisive, being in that situation so far from home,' says Ashley. 'I had everything planned, but I had to make last-minute decisions, such as the worktops and curtains, from the hospital.' By the time Oli had recovered, the builders had finished the interior, the family moved back in and Ashley was able to get on with the decorating.

She was keen to create a classic country house style. 'My mother is American and I'm influenced by my roots, so the pool room, for instance, has a New England look.' Unusual finds and beautiful fabrics contribute to the house's warm and welcoming character.

The family love living here and the house works particularly well at Christmas. 'We alternate between spending the holidays in America and England and can fit the whole family in when we're here,' says Ashley. 'Christmas was an important time for us when we were growing up as we would see our grandparents from the States. Now, we love to start decorating the house on the middle weekend of December. Pride of place goes to a sledge decoration that my great-grandpa wrote on the back of. It brings back so many happy memories of Christmases that have gone before.'

Thudson Homes & Interiors, 01428 651196, hudsonhomesandinteriors.com.

#### ON OUR DOORSTEP...

\*

Visit... 'Sarah Moore (01243 535414, sarahmoorehome.co.uk), an interior and homewares designer, who holds a Christmas sale at her barn in Hooksway each year. It has a lovely atmosphere with wreath-making workshops, a pop-up café and you can pick up beautiful Christmas bits and pieces to decorate your home.'

Shop at... 'Three Gates Gallery (07885 101479, three gates gallery. com) in Haslemere, where Fiona Lawrenson has a private house sale twice a year and I always snap up individual finds. I also like The Little Shed (01483 808113, littleshedhome.co.uk) in Godalming, which has lovely furniture and accessories.'

Gofor a meal at... 'Noah's Ark (01428 707346, noahsarkinn.co.uk) at Lurgashall. It's in a quintessentially English village and they make the best Bloody Marys in the South!'

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#### Need to know...

Whether you're a fan of Parisian chic or traditional country style, an upholstered bed is an opportunity to add another layer of pattern. The padded shape is a natural match for the current trend for deep buttoning, although a smooth finish, edged with piping, will show off a patterned fabric more distinctly. Customising the frame with paint and an antique finish add further to the appeal.

#### Where to buy...

- French Finds for vintage upholstered beds.
- **Leporello** for custom-painted upholstered beds.
- Simon Horn for beds in your choice of fabric.

For more ideas go to housetohome.co.uk/ countryhomesandinteriors



Seek out classic toys. The Dartmouth Pink dolls' house, H85xW58xD36cm, £179.99. The Dolls House Emporium.



Add cute details. Scarlett linen, col Antique Stone and Ruby, £54 m, Peony & Sage. Bunny soft toy, £23, Aspace.

# Be inspired by Ashley's daughter's bedroom



**Pick subtle pinks.** Yves Delorme Prisme **throw,** col Nude, £359, Amara. La Petite Rose **lights,** L330cm, £19.95, Dotcomgiftshop.



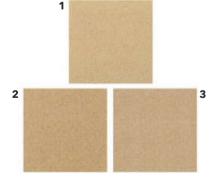
**Go for simple style.** Rye Stripe **cotton**, £32 m, Laura Ashley. Victoria **bedside table**, £125, Little Home at John Lewis.



Mix soft pattern. Cashmere Pastoral throw, £550, Johnstons of Elgin. Artwork, 30cm sq, £17.50, Graham & Brown at Debenhams.

#### FIND THE PERFECT

NEUTRAL CARPET



**1** Bell Twist, col Honeysuckle; **2** Bell Twist, col Maize; **3** Bell Twist, col York Stone, all £40 sq m, Brintons.









What we love most about living here...
'The setting is timeless and beautiful.
It is the sort of place I dreamt about living in when I was growing up'







Living room Mid-century style furniture with clean lines creates an uncluttered look. Ercol coffee table, John Lewis. **Sofa**, Designers Guild. Rug, lamp, Habitat. Cushions, HomeSense. (Left) console, mirror, Matthew Higham Antiques. Copper bowl, Cornucopia. Floors, painted in Lime White by Farrow & Ball.

we moved here, we had never been able to spend Christmas together with our families,' says Gemma Mehmed. 'Now, it's an annual event.'

Gemma and her husband, Ed, escaped the city seven years ago, leaving their London flat for this beautiful 15th-century cottage. 'We'd spent many happy holidays in Norfolk, plus Ed's family lives nearby,' says Gemma. 'When we saw this cottage, we loved its idyllic setting and it had lots of potential.'

The couple moved into their new home just three weeks before Christmas, and immediately invited both their families. 'It was quite a squeeze,' Gemma says, 'but being able to all spend Christmas Day together was very special.'

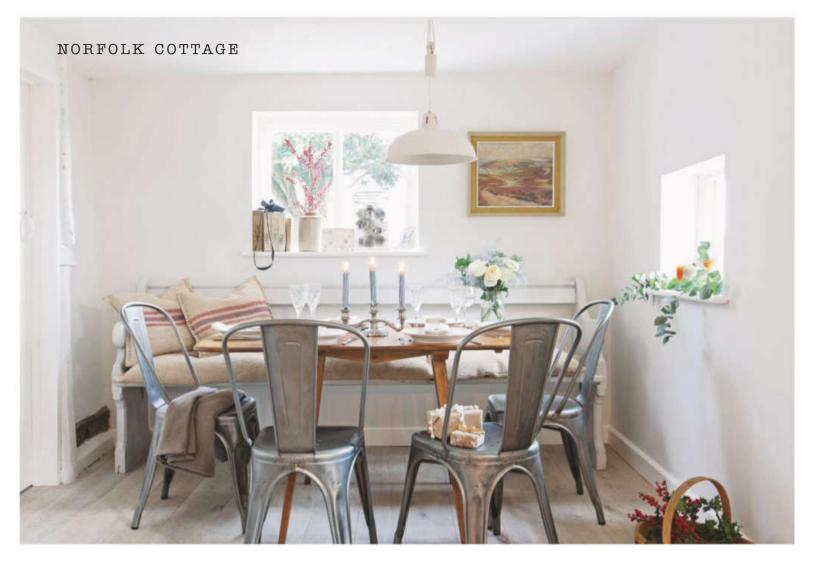
The cottage, which dates back to medieval times, is situated in a pretty village right next to the church. Originally, it would have been the farmer's house with the cattle sleeping downstairs. When Gemma and Ed found it, the property was in need of a complete renovation. As Ed was commuting to London during the week, Gemma decided to leave her job so she could project manage the work. 'At the start of the build I was pregnant, so I was sourcing fixtures and fittings from reclamation yards and antiques shops, as well as preparing for the '>



#### AT HOME WITH...

Owners Gemma Mehmed, who is a stay-at-home mum to two-year-old Fred, and her husband Ed, a business consultant. The Mehmeds have lived in the property since December 2011.

*House* A two-bedroom cottage built in the 15th-century.





#### ON OUR DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'Blickling Hall (01263 738030, nationaltrust.org.uk), near Aylsham. It's magical at Christmas.'

Shop at... 'The Pump Street Bakery (01394 459829, pumpstreetbakery. com) in Orford, and Frank Spurgeon, the Butchers (01379 852 230) in Harleston. We always buy our Christmas tree from the Three Willows Garden Centre (01986 893834, threewillowsgarden centre.co.uk) in Bungay.'

Gofor a meal at... 'The Gunton Arms (01263 832010, theguntonarms.co.uk) in Thorpe Market - a great traditional pub. We also like the Parlour Tea Rooms at the Cornucopia (01379 854500, harlestoncornucopia.co.uk) in the old Corn Exchange in Harleston.'

baby's arrival' she says. 'When Fred was born, I'd strap him to me and we'd go on-site together.'

The work took two years to complete, and having never undertaken such a big project before, Gemma and Ed had to learn as they went along. 'In hindsight, we should have been clearer about what we wanted before the builders started, then we could have made decisions without pressure,' says Gemma.

The couple saved many of the original features, restoring the fireplace and revealing the stone floors. They also sourced reclaimed fixtures, like a porcelain basin, originally from a Parisian hotel.

Having decided on a contemporary, Scandinavian look, they decorated their home in simple colours with rustic wooden furnishings. 'We took inspiration from the colour palette of Rose Uniacke, whose shop we used to visit in London,' says Gemma.

Now the cottage is finished, Gemma enjoys getting it ready for Christmas with berries, ivy and ferns picked up from her garden or on walks. 'Our family arrives on Christmas Eve,' she says. 'Mum makes her famous mince pies and we walk to the church for the carol concert. Living here has meant our family has new traditions that we enjoy together.'

□ Gemma and Ed's cottage is available to rent.
 For details visit airbnb.co.uk/rooms/3837223. 
 »

Dining room
An old church pew contrasts with the industrial-style chairs. Wooden pew, Blackdog Antiques. Metal bistro chairs, The Conran Shop. Ercol dining table, light, John Lewis.





Add a comfortable chair. Burghley armchair with skirt, £321, Maycroft Lloyd Loom Centre.



Pick accessories in natural materials. Jambo jute rug, 90x60cm, £34.95, Luma. Oval body brush, £6, Winter in Venice.

Be inspired by Gemma's

family

bathroom



Washstand

Support the basin in elegant fashion, on a pair of shapely legs.

#### Need to know...

In the days before plumbed-in bathrooms, a washstand comprised a small table holding a basin and jug (or ewer). So when Arts & Crafts designer William Burges created a washstand filled from a cistern in 1880, it was considered the height of luxury. Today, it's the graceful look of a washstand rather than its plumbing that appeals. Washstands lack the storage capacity of a vanity unit, but you can source designs with shelves or built-in towel rails.

#### Where to buy...

- Balineum for a design with chrome legs and glass towel rails.
- Fired Earth for one with glass legs. • Heritage Bathrooms for a washstand with ceramic legs.



Bring in pattern and colour. Nazca shower curtain, col Yellow, £15, John Lewis. Tato oak low stool, £50, Habitat.

#### FIND THE PERFECT

GREY WOOD FLOORING





1 Home of Style Textured White laminate, £33.46 for 2.39 sq m; 2 Hygena Soft White engineered wood, £47.52 for 1.44 sq m; 3 Schreiber Rushmore Chestnut laminate,

£25.95 for 1.73 sq m, all Homebase.





Buckingham bath with Imp feet in chrome finish, from £500, Heritage Bathrooms.



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#### NORTH YORKSHIRE CONVERSION











#### AT HOME WITH...

Owner Vicki Cree, who works for an animal and plant health agency. She lives here with Patterdale Terrier, Tag. Her horses, Freddie (above), JJ, Peggy and Hamish are kept in stables on her parents' property, which is adjacent.

House A one-bedroom Victorian stable conversion.

Jetting on the first rung of the housing ladder is a challenge for most young people, but imagine trying to find your first home with enough outdoor space to stable your horses. Luckily for Vicki Cree, her parents had a huge garden with outbuildings ripe for turning into a home for her and with enough stabling nearby for her equine brood. 'It made sense to build in my parents' garden,' says Vicki. And that's exactly what she did.

Her new home was originally a row of small stables, later extended to make a garage. 'They were too attractive to be just a garage and crying out to be something more,' Vicki says. What makes the cottage special, too, is not just its idyllic setting in the shadow of the Hambleton Hills and the Kilburn White Horse, but the fact that the renovations were mostly done by her family - father, Terry, and brother, Ben. Work started in 2011 but was confined to evenings and weekends. A good friend, Tony, then stepped in to help, which speeded things up a lot. Two years later, Vicki could move in.

'I designed the layout myself, working with the existing doors and windows,' says Vicki. As the cottage is quite compact, she used cool neutrals to give a light, airy feel. Enhancing that are florals and painted furniture, much of it from her mother's business, Homemade & Vintage.

'My mum, Jackie, and her friend, Sarah, run pop-up >>

Kitchen Here and throughout the house are vintage finds sourced and upcycled by Vicki's mum. Offcuts from the tree give the mug rack a festive feel.









#### ON MY DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'The market town of Helmsley, a wonderful little place with fabulous shops and eateries. I also love nearby Rievaulx Abbey (01439 798228, english-heritage. org.uk) - you can walk to it from Helmsley Castle and it's a lovely route. If you ride, there are also plenty of bridleways. Finish with a cream tea at Rievaulx's tearooms.'

Shop at... 'Beadlam Grange Farmshop & Tearoom (01439 770303, beadlamgrange.co.uk) near Helmsley. Also, Robert and Ruby (01439 408008, robertandruby.co. uk) in Helmsley, a great shop with some fantastic interior buys.'

Go for a meal at... 'The Carpenters Arms (01845 537369, thecarpenters armsfelixkirk.com) in Felixkirk, for Sunday lunch and locally grown produce.'

shops in local village halls, where they sell vintage treasures that they buy in car boot sales and local auctions.' Vicki says. 'They then paint and upcycle them with pretty fabric trimmings to create gifts for the home.' Vicki's place is full of finds sourced by Jackie, creating a welcoming yet stylish interior.

A stone's throw from Vicki's cottage is a shepherd's hut, built by Terry and Ben as a surprise Christmas present for Jackie in 2013. Named Bessie, after Vicki's great-great aunt, it's used by Vicki and her mum as a home office.

Christmas, as you might expect, is very much a family affair as well. On Christmas morning, after tending to and feeding the horses, Vicki cooks bacon sandwiches for the whole family, who spend the rest of the morning in her cottage. Later, they sit down to a traditional roast Christmas lunch with all the trimmings, prepared by Jackie, in the main house. Lunch is followed by a walk with the dogs, television, games and more present opening. Even the dogs get a Christmas present each. 'It's so nice to be so close to my family at this special time of year,' Vicki says.

Thomemade & Vintage, homemadeandvintage.co.uk. Pop-up shops will appear at Coxwold Village Hall, Coxwold, North Yorkshire Y061 4BB, on 4, 5 and 6 December. »

Shepherd's hut Used by both Vicki and her mum, the hut is decorated in a pretty country colour palette. Chair, Homemade & Vintage. Walls, painted in **Borrowed Light** by Farrow & Ball.



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Make the fireplace a focal point. Chevy **stocking**, H45cm, £60, Tori Murphy. Fireplace companion set, H65cm, £19.55, Roman at Home.



Add a touch of rustic chic. Windsor wooden tripod table lamp, H58cm, £44.99, Pacific Lifestyle.



Wooden stool

Varnished or painted, with plain or turned legs, this versatile piece makes a great fireside perch.

#### Need to know...

It's the sort of item you might pick up at a country antiques market or fair, small enough to pop in the back of the car and just needing to be brought up to scratch with a little attention. Fix a wobbly stool by re-gluing and tightening any loose joints, and restore the finish with wax filler sticks and touch-up pens (try Liberon). Complete with a coat of wax or varnish to bring out the beauty of the natural colour.

#### Where to buy...

- Adams Antiques for antique stools. • Another Country for stools and benches in beech, oak and ash.
  - · Rectory Blue for painted, turned-leg stools.



Brighten up with pattern. Emily Bond cushion, 43cm sq, £40, John Lewis. Horse and Hound footstool, H38xW102x D51cm, £375, A Little Furniture Shop.

# Be inspired by Vicki's living room

#### FIND THE PERFECT

#### NEUTRAL PAINT



1 Limehouse; 2 Whitehall; 3 Hanover Square, all £38 for 2.5L, Mylands.



Invest in a gorgeous stove. Swift 1000 multifuel woodburner, H54.6xW38.8xD43.8cm, £599, Morsø.



For more ideas go to housetohome.co.uk/ countryhomesandinteriors



Choose natural textures. Scoop log baskets, H44xW60xD40cm (largest), £59 for 2, Red Hamper.



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Pages 58-59



USHER IN FRIENDS, OLD AND NEW Woodland real foliage **wreath** (with added roses), from £55, The Fresh Flower Company. Red bow, grosgrain, 50mm, £4.25 m, Merchant & Mills. (On door handle) Red baubles, £3.50; green feather baubles, £4, John Lewis. Red paper bauble, £4.99 for 3, Rastall & Daughters. Garland (on window ledge), £45, The Contemporary Home. Vintage sack barrow, £145; brown leather satchel, £80, Scaramanga. Spray Flowers clutch with detachable strap, £55; Garden Rose overnight bag, £40, Cath Kidston. The Entrepreneur stowaway case, £240; carry-on case, £225; overnighter (in doorway), £146, all Steamline Luggage. Tapered wooden lantern, from £12; throw, £20, both Tesco. Giftwrap (on case and under

window), Poppy Meadow, £6.95 for 5 sheets; Midnight Garden umbrella, £14.95, Dotcomgiftshop. Holly tree, £20, Tesco. Wooden crates, £15 for 2, George. Fabric storage basket, col Cream, £22 for 2 (col Grey not shown), Sainsbury's. Red giftwrap, £3 for 2m roll, Paperchase. Ribbons, from £2, Hobbycraft. Fishbone throw, col Sea Green, £65, Holly's House. Tartan knee blanket, col Dark Maple, £20, The Tartan Blanket Co. Bark **lantern** with star cut-out, £7.99; panettone, £14.99, both Dobbies. Faux acorn twigs, £9 each, Olive & The Fox. Bucket, similar from Cox & Cox. Benches, mirror, log crate, all stylist's own.

Pages 60-61





GATHER ROUND THE FIRE Walls, Green Smoke, £38 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball. (On mantelpiece) Metal candlesticks, £20 each, Cox & Cox. Candles, 8in, £6.50 for 6, St Eval Candle Company. Black candlesticks, £8 each, Sainsbury's. Berry cards, £8 for 6, Rowen & Wren. Christmas card, £22 for 12, Cutture. **Wreath,** £50, The White Company. Ceramic **votives,** col Sea Blue Green, £6.50 each, Rockett St George. **Rag garland** fabrics, Liberty and Merchant & Mills. Kintyre stocking, £24.50, Ian Mankin. Paper envelope Advent pieces, from a selection, Hobbycraft. Ribbon, from £2.90, Pipii. Woodburner, similar from Gr8fires. (On burner) Lanterns, £15 and £35, The White Company. Pinecones, from £3.25 for 15, Pipii. Votive, as before. Radial teapot, £37.50, RJR.John Rocha Designer Debenhams. Zinc candle drawer holder, £9; zinc plate, £38 for 4, Rowen & Wren. Red candle, £1.70 for 4, St Eval Candle

Company, Zinc-lined willow basket, £64, Rowen & Wren. Belly **basket,** £25, Olli Ella. Poppy Meadow **giftwrap,** as before. Cushion, Britannia Ayr, col Dark Navy, £39.50 m, Ian Mankin. Bench, £125, Ines Cole. (On bench) Latte plate, £32 for 4, Anthropologie. Latte cup, £10.99, Fine Nordic. Bottled sweets, £3.99, Dobbies. Midnight Garden giftwrap, £6.95 for 5 sheets Dotcomgiftshop. Cushion, Wiltshire J, £22.50 m, Liberty. Knee blanket, as before. Chair, £340, Ercol. Urla rug, £745, Oka.

RAISE A TOAST LSA decanter with base, £85; red tumblers, £1 each, all John Lewis. Midnight Garden flask, £12.95, Dotcomgiftshop. Bianca spoon, £4.49; Oona jug, £16.99; runner, £27.99; bowl, £7.49, all Fine Nordic. Grandiflora paper napkins, £3.50 for 20, Not on the High Street. Wooden tag (with sticker), £2 for 4, Hobbycraft.

Pages 62-63





GET PERSONAL! Runner, Bon Appetit linen, £16 m, Dee Puddy. Blackfriars check tablecloth, €204.50; green napkin, €15, both Libeco. Spode Winter's Scene plates, from £9 (side); walnut and berry wreath, £5, John Lewis. Latte plate, £32 for 4, Anthropologie. **Underplate**, £16, Oka. Reusable **cracker**, £99.95 for 6, Highgrove Shop. **Bottles**, £15.95 for 3, Dee Puddy. Aquarelle cutlery, from £12, Holly's House. Tumblers, col Turquoise, £55 for 4; col Red, £28 for 4, all Oka. Candlestick, £20 for 2, Cox & Cox. Labels, £5 for 36 with pen, Talking Tables. Red candle, 8in, as before.

SHARE A SIMPLE FEAST Wall, Green Smoke, as before. Linen blind, £32 m, Volga Linen. Tieback, red

grosgrain, 50mm, £4.25 m, Merchant & Mills. Oceanic chairs, £345 each, Ercol. Suffolk dining table, £1,140; Suffolk dining chair, £200, both Neptune. Pinner bench, £495, Heal's. (On table) Bon Appetit runner, tablecloth, napkin, plates, underplate, tumblers, crackers, bottles, candles, all as before. Cream cutlery, £25 for 16 pieces, Very. Vases, £2.50 each, Dee Puddy. Whitewashed candlesticks, £20 for 2, Cox & Cox. Earthenware cube candle holder, £2.04, St Eval Candle Company. Cushions, (on bench) Dormston, £68 m, Cloth & Clover. (Just seen) Wiltshire J, as before. Abelone tea towel, col Dark Grey, £6.99, Fine Nordic. Sheepskin, £55, Rockett St George. Chandelier garland, from £95, The Fresh Flower Company.

Pages 64-65





MAKE MERRY ROUND THE TREE Walls, rug,

tree, paper baubles, feather baubles, as before. Wallpaper, Kerstin, 486-01, £89 a roll, Sandberg. Faux berry wreath, £62, Oka. (On shelf) Ceramic **pinecones**, £8 each, Rowen & Wren. Woodland Picnic plates, £14 each, Anthropologie. Bottle vases, £21 for 3 with wood tray, Olive & The Fox. Christmas postcards, £10 for 10, Rastall & Daughters. Stephanie latte **cup,** £10.99, Fine Nordic. Bird, £8, Sainsbury's. Barra sofa, £1,299; knitted pouffe, £89, Marks & Spencer. Cushions (from far left): 1 Britannia Ayr, as before. **2** Pattman Ivy, £90 m, Liberty. **3** Chalet Massif, £49.95 m, Bronte by Moon. 4 Hately, £48 m, Cabbages & Roses. 5 Wiltshire J, as before. Throws, Winterberry Check, £79, Marks & Spencer. Lifestyle herringbone, £60, The Tartan Blanket Company. Side table, £48; ceramic vase, similar from Debenhams. Vintage Indian trunk, £295, Ines Cole. Petrol-effect **baubles,** £3.99 each, Wyevale Garden Centres.

Red baubles, £3.99 for 12; pinecone bauble, £3.99, Dobbies. Wooden decorations, from £3, George. Ribbons, as before. **Bakers' twine,** col Red, £5.95 a roll, Paperchase.

CREATE ADVENT BUNTING

Wall, Malachite, £35.50 for 2.5L, Fired Earth. Rug, KA100 with C15 border, 2x1m, £224.40, Crucial Trading. Chloe chair, col Ruby, £275, Within Home. Cushion, £49.95, Bronte by Moon. Slip-on trainers, £28; Bloomsbury Bouquet backpack, £45, Cath Kidston. The Entrepreneur vanity case, £120, Steamline Luggage. Heart **wreath**, £4.99, Dobbies. Feathers in **glass bottle,** £4, John Lewis. **Bunting,** (pockets, from left) Demon Scarlet 150; Sweeps Scrim, both £19 m, Merchant & Mills. (Flaps) Natural Hatley, Dormston, Wiltshire J, Britannia Ayr, as before. Buttons and tags, Hobbycraft. Basket, £40, Cox & Cox. Ribbon, Pipii as before. Skates, camera, stylist's own.

Page 67



WAKE UP TO CHRISTMAS Wallpapers (from top), Flora 5474, £44 a roll, Borastapeter. Scrapwood, PHE-05, £199 a roll, Rockett St George. Pinner four-poster double bed, col Atlantic Blue, £985, Heal's. (On bed) The Linen Works linen kingsize **duvet cover**, col Parisian Blue, £195; **pillowcase**, £37.50, both Rockett St George. **Cushions** (from left): **1** Chalet Massif, col Charcoal/Red, £49.95 m, Bronte By Moon. 2 Carnation Linen, £60, Not on the High Street. Spray Flowers hard case for iPad mini, £30, Cath Kidston. Lifestyle New Wool blanket, £60, The Tartan Blanket Co. Chunky knitted throw, £120, RJR.John Rocha Designer at

Debenhams. **Trunk**, as before. Charles **bow tie**, £25, Dancy at Not on the High Street. Entrepreneur overnighter, as before. (In overnighter) **Trainers,** as before; Spray Flowers, col Black, zip **wallet,** £28, both Cath Kidston. Gustavian **side** table, £149, Oka. Jazz table lamp, from £169, Olive & The Fox. Bianca jug, €39.90, Fine Nordic. Helianthus goblet, £6, Anthropologie. French canning jar, £25, Ines Cole. Pinecones, Pipii, as before. Hexagonal floral box (just seen), £8, Sainsbury's. (On wall, from left) Garden Rose dress, £75, Cath Kidston. Prints, Midnight Rose, £33.95; You Make Everything Beautiful, £23, both Not on the High Street.



#### FOR THE FULL TETRAD EXPERIENCE PLEASE CONTACT OUR PREMIER STOCKISTS LISTED BELOW

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- **1 Sparkle with a string of delicate lighting.** Naked wire light garland, £15.50, Cox & Cox.
- 2 Paint branches to make a festive display. Gold
- metallic paint (on branch), £3 for 300ml, Hobbycraft. **3 Add a glint of copper.** Copper Maroq light garland, £21.50, Red Lilly.
- **4 Create a warming note.** Hammered copper bowl, £29.95, London Garden Trading at Not on the High Street.
- **5 Go for star quality.** Glass star tealight holder, £35. Plümo.
- **6 Raise the bar.** Stemmed gold glass tealight holder, £20, House of Fraser.
- 7 Choose a sleek centrepiece for your festive

- **table.** Pillar candle, £13.48, St Eval Candle Company. **8 Introduce delicate touches of lace.** Lace ribbon, £5.95 a roll, Wild & Wolf at The Makery.
- **9 Bring the outside in.** Copper Robin light garland, £12, Paperchase.
- 10 Decorate with pops of gold for a subtle hint of luxury. Malika gold tealight holder, £21, LSA International.
- 11 Place pretty tealights around for a soft warmth. Star tealights, £20 for 9, Cox & Cox.

  12 Go dotty over giftwrap. Gold spotty paper,
- **12 Go dotty over giftwrap.** Gold spotty pape £3.50, Selfridges.
- **13 Try a modern take on the classic hurricane lantern.** Geometric Almo lantern, £12.95, Nkuku.

- **14 Shine bright from every angle.** Geometric brass candle holder, £32, Graham and Green.
- **15 Indulge all your senses.** Orange and cinnamon gold half-dipped candles, £9.96 each, St Eval Candle Company.
- **16 Give this light a starring role.** Cut-out star marquee light, £125, BHS.
- **17 Let nature be your inspiration when wrapping gifts.** Brown paper, £2 for 8m; gold skeleton leaf, £1 for 20, both Hobbycraft.
- **18 Pick a votive that will gleam with or without a candle.** Copper bowl tealight holder, £14.95, Graham and Green. **>>**



1 Make up pretty packages tied up with berries. Faux snowberry garland, £18.75,

2 String up a silvered glass wreath and evoke icy moonlit moments. Chintu glass wreath, £89.95, Nkuku.

3 Go for a natural look with extra sparkle. Gold glitter wreath, £16.99, Gisela Graham.

4 Keep the festive look fresh and green. White berry wreath, £29.50, Marks & Spencer.

5 Find a special place to hang a mini wreath.

Box wreath, £17.50, Rockett St George.

6 Use silver ribbon for adornment. Silver sparkle ribbon, £5.95 a roll, Wild & Wolf at The Makery.

7 Arrange frosted sprigs all along the mantelpiece. Frosted spray branch with pine cones, £17.50, Selfridges.

8 Greet guests with a sparkly welcome. Mini star wreath, £10, Marks & Spencer.

9, 10 Spruce up your tree with decorations made from natural materials. Birch bark star and snowflake, £16.50 for 24, Cox & Cox.

11 Use lacy ribbon on gifts for an attractive finishing touch. Cream lace ribbon, £5.95 a roll, Wild & Wolf at The Makery.

12 Hang cards or baubles from this twinkling twine. Starry string, £6, Nordic House.

13 Wrap presents with stylish sophistication. Gold stripe paper, £1 a sheet, Hobbycraft.

14 Add a touch of frost for authenticity. Snowy cone garland, £13.99, Gisela Graham.

15 Stick to simplicity with this twiggy garland. Twig star garland, £15.99, Gisela Graham.







Go for a cool, contemporary look. Choose decorations in icy shades of blue and steel, with a hint of Scandi style.

Wine **glasses**, £11.95 each; candy **jar**, £5.95, both Graham and Green. Folk **bell**, £4.20, Gisela Graham. White **bauble**, £6, Marks & Spencer. Mesh **star**, £9.95; star **tray**, £42 for 2, both Nordic House. Blue **bauble**, £25 for 20, Rockett St George. Bell **garland**, £24, Rowen & Wren. (Middle) **Basket**, £28, Summerill & Bishop. Dot **baubles**, £20 for 6,

Rockett St George. Zala glass **baubles**, £14.95 for 3, Nkuku. Watercolour **plate**, £8 for 4, George. Bonbon **jar**, £35, LSA International. Porcelain **leaf**, £5, Nordic House. Small **baubles**, £4 for 25, Paperchase. **Coupe**, £8.95, Summerill & Bishop. Star **baubles**, £23 for 6, Selfridges. Ribbon, stylist's own. Zinc **tree**, £23, Nordic House. Glass **teapot**, £25, Petersham Nurseries. Mini **baubles**, £12 for 20, Rockett St George. (Below) **Tumblers**, £9.95, Summerill & Bishop. **Cones**, £8 each, Heal's.

Resin antler, £27 for 4, Cox & Cox. Large glass bauble, £6.25, Selfridges. Punch bowl, £70, LSA International. Greeny blue baubles, as before. Domed platter, £50, Petersham Nurseries. Wire deer, £4.50, Cox & Cox. Nordic charger plate, £12.50, Marks & Spencer. Wooden horse, £24.95; glass baubles with feathers, £9.95 for 3, both Nordic House. Mini glass balls (around horse's neck), £13.99 for 12, Gisela Graham. Mini tree, £4.50; zinc pot, £5, both Petersham Nurseries.

SEE PAGE 149 FOR PHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES



- **1 Label it.** Porcelain star, £4 for 2, Nordic House. **2 Add some sparkle to your gifts.** Silver sparkle ribbon, £5.95 a roll, Wild & Wolf at The Makery.
- **3 Arrange a wonder in white.** Ceramic statement stars, £8.99, Gisela Graham.
- **4 Stay simple.** Craft paper, £2 for 8m, Hobbycraft. **5 Create an angelic touch.** Ceramic angel wings, £3, Rockett St George. Ribbon, stylist's own.
- **6 Add a vintage vibe.** Nordic smoke charger plate, £12.50, Marks & Spencer.
- **7 Finish off your tree with a festive flourish.** Star tree topper, £34.95, Selfridges.
- **8 Put your own stamp on it.** Personalised wooden bauble, £9.50 for 3, Thread Squirrel at Not on the High Street.
- **9, 10 Invest in decorations to enjoy year after year.** Clear glass optic bauble, £12; sheer zinc glass bauble, £12, both LSA International at Heal's. White bisque ceramic bauble, £5.99, Gisela Graham.
- 11 Let it snow. White snowflake, £5, Nordic House.
- **12 Celebrate the festive season.** Datia etched silver bauble, £16.96 for 4, Nkuku.
- **13 Cover your tree in delicate decorations.** Mini shatterproof baubles, £12.50 for 180, Paperchase. **14 Usher in a seasonal Scandi look.** Baubles,
- £20 for 20, Rockett St George. **15 Serve up a Christmas feast.** Carved wooden chopping board, £32, Rockett St George.
- 16 Get cracking. Nutcrackers, £20, Plümo.
- 17 Choose deep turquoise for contrast. Small

- turqoise blue baubles, £12 for 20, Rockett St George. **18 Chill out.** Ice blue napkins, £95 for 6, Summerill & Bishop.
- **19 Ring the changes.** Beti ceramic bell decoration, £18 for 6, Rowen & Wren.
- **20 Adorn trees and tables or fill vases.** Green glass baubles, £5 each, Marks & Spencer.
- **21 Cover up.** Emily linen tablecloth, £77, Neptune. **22 Keep it cool.** Grey star spangled baubles, £16.50 for 6, Cox & Cox.
- **23 Revel in rustic.** Antler, £4 for 2, Nordic House. **24 Go for the chop.** Medium board, £27; large board, £55, both Graham and Green.
- **25 Shine on.** Dew Drop glass baubles, £18.96 for 12, Nkuku.







## TUCKED IN

Even the tiniest of spaces can be used to create a dramatic display of firewood. Keep an eye out for any nooks and crannies in your house that might offer up the perfect spot for storage, such as this gap between two kitchen cupboards. Otherwise dead space, it's now an eye-catching store with a quirky mix of logs in a variety of sizes. Decorative colour-waxed logs are also an option for a truly bespoke look.

## Q NATURAL SELECTION

Wood stored in alcoves in an inglenook fireplace makes a great design feature. Use chestnut logs with undamaged bark and an attractive end grain for a rustic feel. Don't forget the ubiquitous log basket, either, for adding natural charm. As John Sims-Hilditch co-founder of Neptune suggests, 'The willow of a log basket provides a warm, textural element to your room.'

## 4 NICELY SEASONED

Highlight the architecture of orderly brickwork in a former rural industrial space with rows of logs piled on black-painted shelving. Echoing the windows, the striking shelves are also a great way of getting organised as you can use them as a sorting system for different grades of wood, from kindling to larger logs.»











## ☐ FILL THE FRAME

Beams are part of the natural framework of a building and many country homes make a feature out of them. Take it one step further by adding logs into the mix for decorative effect. For visual appeal in a modern country house, display a column like this to show off the beauty of wood, selecting rounded and neatly sawn logs to fill to the height and width of the column.

## CUPBOARD LOVE

Create an internal log store to add rustic character and practical purpose to a large hallway. Jon Holloway, founder of Garden Trading says, 'A rustic shelving unit or potting table in the hallway offers a practical and imaginative storage solution with space for decorative displays on top and the perfect shelf for stacking logs underneath.'

CREATE AN ILLUSION
Add a rustic feel by filling an empty fireplace with logs - the more higgedly-piggedly they look, the better. Keith Dickson of The Log Basket says, 'Logs can be used as a decorative feature to bring warm natural charm to an interior. They can be rustic with bark, neatly peeled, or even painted to co-ordinate. Just make sure they are dried to interior moisture levels to avoid mould.'

SEE PAGE 149 FOR PHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES







## WHAT PETS EAT ISN'T ALWAYS WHAT PETS NEED



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# FEATURE AND STYLING SARA BIRD STYLING ASSISTANT ROSANNA JOHNSON PHOTOGRAPHS TIM YOUNG



## VIDEO Watch our 'Modern Country Makes' videos at country-days.co.uk

## How to MAKE THEM YOURSELF

## Homemade monogram cookies

Surprise foodie friends with delicious treats presented in a decorative jar. Start by making cookies following your chosen recipe. Using a cookie cutter, press and cut the dough into monogram initials and festive shapes, and bake according to your recipe. When cool, place the cookies into glass jars. Wrap and stick bands of coloured card around the jars for extra grip and decoration – double-sided tape is ideal for this. Add a colourful tag or create a label with a letter cookie cutter, then thread with woven name tag ribbon sewn with a bespoke message – try Woven Labels UK for a wide variety of fonts and colours. Add more decorative ribbon and tie in a bow to finish.



Kilner jar, £3.50, Sainsbury's. Hemsmak jar, £6, Ikea. Ribbons, from a selection, Jane Means. Bespoke woven sew-on ribbon, from £2.50 for 36, Woven Labels UK. Letter A cookie cutter, £2.76, Cakes, Cookies & Crafts Shop. Cooling rack, similar from Lakeland.

## 'Promise' gift vouchers

Turn a clipboard into a gift that keeps on giving with specially chosen treats and wishes written up as a promise of things to come. Think of some lovely ideas to make or do for a loved one and document in a gift voucher. The voucher could be designed on a computer or drawn freehand. For inspiration, look at free font calligraphy websites to get ideas for lettering styles and designs (Pinterest has a good selection for a beginner), or try one of the free clip art sites on the internet. When designing your gift voucher, remember to include an introduction to the promise, a tear-off line and details of the promise itself. Print out on A4 card, if using a computer, then clip to the board.



Clipboard, similar from Ebay. Ribbon, from a selection at Jane Means. Wrapping paper, from a selection at House of Fraser and Tesco Direct. Plate (from Two Tone dinner set), £20 for 12 pieces, Tesco Direct. Mince pies, £10 for 12, Bettys. Mug, £6.50; fabric (made into a napkin), from a selection at Cath Kidston.

## Bespoke Christmas crackers

Hide a gift in a homemade personalised cracker. Make three tubes of equal diameter using thin pliable card, one longer in length than the other two, and join each one with sticky tape. Cut out a rectangle of brown paper large enough to fit around the tubes when they are lined up (longest in the middle) end to end. Tape a snap at either end to the brown paper. Place your present, joke and hat inside the central tube, then roll the brown paper around the tubes before gathering together where the tubes join to create the familiar cracker shape. Secure with ribbon and decorate with paper strips, using double-sided tape, before adding a name card.



Cracker-making kit, £2.67 for 12 snaps, jokes and hats, Fred Aldous. Wrapping paper, from a selection at House of Fraser, Cath Kidston and Tesco Direct. Ribbons, from a selection at Jane Means. Twine, from a selection at The Essentials Company. Wooden trug, similar from Ebay.

## Personalised gardener's pots

Give green-fingered friends something to grow and tend with specially selected seeds and plant markers in a decorative pot. Begin by placing your chosen seeds into separate marked envelopes. Gather the envelopes together and secure with ribbon and a wax seal – we used a hot wax gun for ease and to create even-sized seals. Pretty up small pots with paint – use one colour for the first layer, then dry-brush with another colour for a decorative effect. Allow to dry, then decorate with layers of ribbon and hessian using double-sided tape. Add lettering to a plant marker with alphabet stamps and an ink block, then assemble as shown.



Bay and fig **plants**, from a selection at The Gluttonous Gardener. **Plant pots**, from a selection at Homebase (and then painted). **Envelopes**, from a selection at Etsy. Plant **markers**, 49p each, The Essentials Company. Manuscript **wax seal** set, £8; **wax gun** (not seen), £10, Hobbycraft.



## 'I'M PASSIONATE ABOUT HONEST, SIMPLE FOOD'

## Cook, writer and entrepreneur Romilla Arber

omilla Arber has been interested in food since she was a child. Growing \_up in Basingstoke in the 1970s, she had a foodie mum who was way ahead of her time serving hummus and imaginatively dressed salads when everyone else was dishing up Smash and Vesta curries.

Despite going on to have a successful career as a lawyer, Romilla's first love remained food and, in 2008, she set up the Food Education Trust, a charity to promote the benefits of a balanced home-cooked diet. Then came her collection of family recipes and experiences of feeding her family of four children in the book What's For Dinner?, followed recently by Second Helpings. Fulfilling a long-held dream, in January 2014 Romilla set up the inspirational Honesty Cookery School in Hampshire, followed the same year by the Crown & Garter pub and bakery. We headed to the Hampshire/Berkshire borders to find out about Romilla's plans for Christmas...

TELL US ABOUT YOUR HOME ... I live in a quiet, rural location in the heart of the Hampshire countryside, with my husband Simon, an entrepreneur, and children, Joe, 19, Emil, 18, Emanuel, 15, and Yolanda, 11. When I was pregnant with Emanuel, we

decided to move out of the city, and in 1997 found the Queen Anne house that was to become our home. We knew we were so lucky to find it even though it needed a huge renovation project. We embarked on the building works but, in hindsight, I think you need to live somewhere to get to grips with the feel of the place before making alterations. We realised that we'd got things wrong, so after nine years we moved out and changed the layout all over again!

### IS THIS YOUR FOREVER HOME?

Definitely. It's in a beautiful location with great views, and it's so peaceful here. It's a large house with six bedrooms, but doesn't feel overwhelming inside because of the layout, and is so easy to manage.

### WHAT ARE YOUR MEMORIES OF

GROWING UP? I grew up in a threebedroom house with three brothers. But Basingstoke wasn't the big town then that it is now, and we lived near open countryside. I have such fond memories of blackberry picking in autumn for endless jam-making sessions. In the summer holidays we would get jobs 'roguing' in the farm fields, picking out the wild oats from the wheat. The sun always seemed to shine and we would be »

























Menu planning with executive chef Matthew Ambrose.

## MY KIND OF COUNTRY





I couldn't live without ... MY WONDERFUL FAMILY, A GOOD BOOK AND MAKE-UP!









outside all day, with a packed lunch to keep us going. And, even better, we got paid for it.

LIVING IN THE COUNTRY? I think there is more of a connection with food. You are more conscious of the seasons, the vegetable garden coming to life, growing abundantly, then going to sleep again. You appreciate all the work that goes into getting food on your plate. I love growing salad leaves (I really hate the stuff out of a bag), and onions and garlic, the base of so much home cooking. My favourite season is probably autumn, especially if we've had a good summer leading to a bountiful haul.

WHAT'S GROWING IN YOUR KITCHEN GARDEN RIGHT NOW? A good stock of winter vegetables such as leeks and cabbages. We supply fresh vegetables to the cookery school all year round.

SHOPS? Whenever we need inspiration for the house, we head to 03 Interiors in Pangbourne. They completely get what we want and we've been working with them for years. They helped with the interior for the cookery school, too. I go to Premier Cheese for fine artisan cheeses, as their outlook on food is similar to mine. Cobbs Farm Shop in Hungerford stocks local produce and has a butcher, fishmonger, delicatessen and florist. Eliane's, also in Hungerford, is a wonderful café serving delicious wholesome food.

IT'S SUNDAY LUNCHTIME - WHERE DO YOU HEAD FOR? My own pub! At the Crown & Garter in Inkpen, we serve modern British food made from scratch using local, seasonal ingredients. I'm sampling the Christmas menu at the moment and my favourites are the chestnut and rosemary soup, the mushroom ragoût, and the ginger burnt cream served with dried fruit compote. We stock only European wines because of the air miles and are soon going to serve Chapel Down English wine, too.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE THING ABOUT CHRISTMAS? Making the Christmas pudding every year on Stir-Up \*

## ROMILLA'S COUNTRY VIBE

What Christmas means to you...

Being with my family.

**Favourite Christmas moment...**When the children open their

stockings – it doesn't matter how old they are, it's still very special.

On Christmas Eve you will be...

Having a family dinner at home it.

Having a family dinner at home, it will usually be a curry – I'm half Sri Lankan.

Turkey or goose? Turkey, always.

If not at home for Christmas, where
would you be? Skiing.

Sunday, which is 22 November this year. It's always a big occasion in our house and it makes me think of my mum.

TELL US ABOUT THE CHRISTMAS
COOKERY COURSES... We run something
called Festive Fare. In the morning we make
basics like Christmas pudding, mincemeat,
foolproof pastry, mince pies, Christmas cake
and other festive treats, followed by lunch.
Then there's an option of staying in the
afternoon when we switch to floristry and
make a Christmas wreath.

## HOW DOES YOUR CHRISTMAS SHAPE

**UP?** It's all about home and family. We wake up early and do Christmas stockings, then have a lovely leisurely breakfast, and a late lunch at about 3pm. I do all the cooking and the washing-up!

### WHAT ARE THE HOT ISSUES

LOCALLY? The Royal Oak in Ecchinswell closed for a while, which was a great loss to the local community, and made us all realise how important the village pub is. Thankfully, it's now reopened and is really buzzing with a great atmosphere. It does normal pub grub really well from scratch. I love going there on a Friday night to catch up and have a chat with people.

☎ For details of the Crown & Garter and courses at the Honesty Cookery School, visit honestygroup.co.uk or call 01635 268989.

## Beautiful tiles for every occasion

## TRANSFORM YOUR COUNTRY HOME WITH THE LATEST DESIGNS FOR WALLS AND FLOORS FROM TOPPS TILES

iles are the ultimate practical solution in a country home – perfect for hall floors, heart-of-the-home kitchens and smart bathrooms. With friends and family visiting for Christmas, now is the perfect time to spruce up splashbacks, walls and flooring ready for their arrival. So it pays to shop at a tile specialist that can offer you a vast choice of beautiful high-quality and good-value tiles.

Topps Tiles is the UK's leading tile retailer with designs sourced around the world that are guaranteed to make a style statement. From on-trend brick tiles to delicate mosaics and from this season's must-have patterns to wood and stone-effect, Topps Tiles has something for every interior. Such a huge selection may seem daunting but Topps Tiles' friendly staff are on hand to offer expert advice.

In addition, state-of-the art iPads in store enable customers to access the Visualiser, a user-friendly online tool that lets you create a visual room scheme to reflect your own, try out tiles and share the result. The Visualiser is also accessible from smartphones and tablets.







Make a statement in a kitchen with stunning Parthian tiles, which come in a range of muted colours that can be combined to create an eye-catching geometric floor covering.





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## PROJECTS, PLANS and dreams

ALL THE SOLUTIONS, ADVICE AND INSPIRATION YOU'LL EVER NEED FOR THE PERFECT COUNTRY HOME







Page 94 Design details for a welcoming guest room

Page 100 Warm your home with the ideal stove

Page 104 Ovens built for entertaining »

## Home-from-home guest rooms

MAKE OVERNIGHT VISITORS FEEL COMFORTABLE AND RELAXED WITH A SPACE THAT'S BEEN PLANNED WITH A HOST OF DESIGN DETAILS AND THOUGHTFUL FINISHING TOUCHES





Your very own bath
'A large guest bedroom is a great place
for a freestanding bath,' says Dan Cook,
Designer, CP Hart. 'The tub will become the focal
point and, unlike a shower or wetroom that would
need to be fully waterproofed, all you really
need here is stone, ceramic or wooden flooring
around the bath and adequate ventilation – you
can add a low-voltage extractor fan if necessary.'



Relaxed atmosphere
Layered lighting, ideally dimmable, is key
to making guests feel at ease. Include a pendant
or downlighters for overall light, a standard
lamp to light a corner, and bedside lights for
reading. 'Wall-mounted bedside lights create an
elegant feel,' says Rohan Blacker, Founder,
Pooky. 'Position so the bottom of the bulb is
45cm above the mattress to avoid any glare.'

## Clever storage

Room to hang party dresses and a change of clothes is invaluable. Instead of filling up the room with a space-encroaching wardrobe, consider this corner hanging space with a pretty cover in the fabric of your choice. 'This is one of three designs of tented cupboard that we make,' says Priscilla Parry, Director, Clock House Furniture. 'It can be made in any size and in any fabric with shelving and hanging space to suit.' >>



Tip

It's those extra touches that make a guest's stay special, so be sure to provide a selection of books and magazines to read, plus tourist information about the local area.







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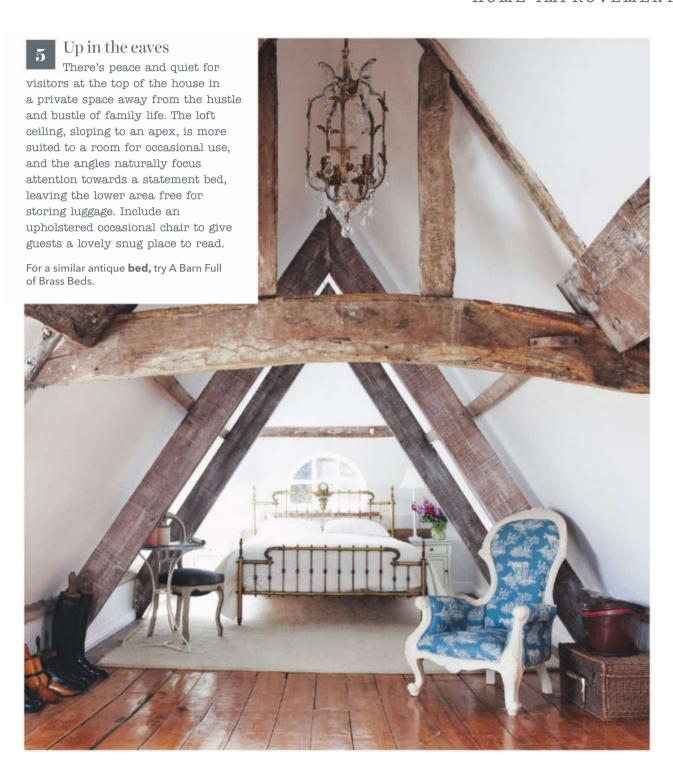




The new Ventum range of stove fans available now

Available from all good stove retailers & online





## Country best BEDSIDE EXTRAS



### WATER ON TAP

Quench night-time thirst with this prettily decorated glass set.

• Josette carafe and tumbler, £26, Laura Ashley.



## RISE AND SHINE

Make sure they're not late for breakfast with a digital alarm in a classic design.

 Newgate Chelsea Arts alarm clock, £25, The Orchard.



## STAY COSY

Warm toes with a luxurious hottie in cable-knit lambswool.

• Amarela Blue hot water bottle cover, £29, Lizard Orchid. >>



Practical seating and storage 'A guest room should be so inviting that your guests never want to leave,' says Lucinda Waterhouse, Director, Oka. 'A foldaway suitcase rack is a practical storage solution for your guests' luggage, encouraging them to fully unpack and make themselves at home. Another welcome touch is a neat sofa at the end of the bed that guests can use for reading or relaxing.'

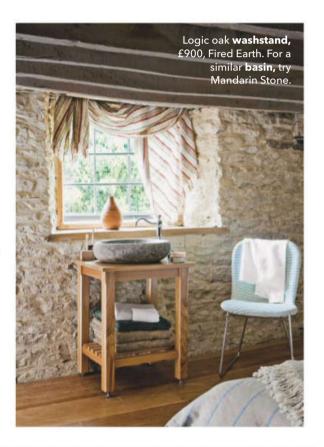


Twin sleeping

In this bedroom careful planning means every inch of space is put to good use. Bateaustyle twin beds are a flexible choice, catering for adult sharers who aren't bedfellows, or children, while a window seat provides a place to catch up on reading when there's no space for an armchair. There's no need to invest in a big wardrobe for occasional guests but drawers and hanging space are essentials.

## A place to wash

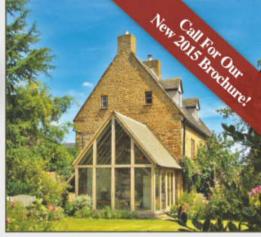
'This wooden washstand topped with a beautiful stone bowl has a timeless, restful simplicity that's perfect for a country guest room,' says Rob Whitaker, Creative Director, Fired Earth. 'The wood complements granite or marble bowls and links beautifully to an array of fabrics and soft furnishings. Look for a design that incorporates shelves or a cupboard to ensure that there's plenty of room for a welcoming supply of towels and soaps for your guests.'



## Country style need-to-know

- BLOCK LIGHT Guests will rest easy with a blackout blind at the window. If fitting to the outside of the recess, ensure a good overlap all around to prevent light seeping around the edges. Alternatively, for a quick-fix, hook ready-made blackout linings on to the back of existing curtains. John Lewis stocks them in standard sizes.
- LIGHT THE NIGHT Provide a little extra help for safely finding the way to the bathroom at night, using an LED night light that's activated by a motion sensor from Argos. Plug one into a socket on the landing or by the top of the stairs, or try a battery-powered version from Amazon.
- UPGRADE A GUEST BED Add an extra layer of comfort with a mattress topper from Devon Duvets. They are filled with natural wool to help regulate body temperature and enclosed in a brushed cotton casing.

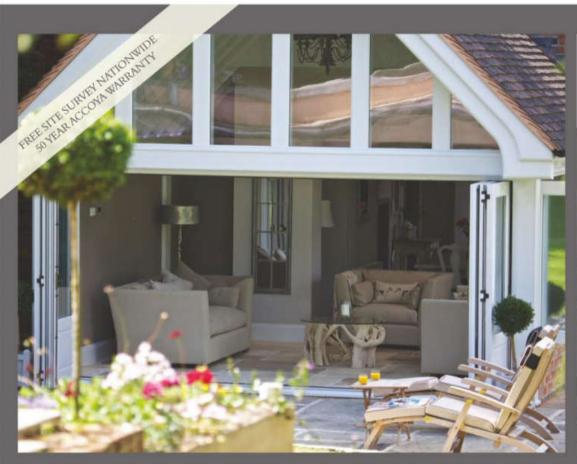






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GARAGES I GARDEN ROOMS I ORANGERIES I HOME OFFICES I CONSERVATORIES I BARNS I STABLES









Garden Rooms, Orangeries, Windows & Bi-Folds

## Stoves for stylish heating

BRRR... IT MAY BE COLD OUT THERE, BUT ONE OF THE LATEST ON-TREND WOODBURNING, MULTIFUEL OR GAS STOVES IS JUST THE THING FOR STAYING SNUG INSIDE AND WARMING YOUR TOES





## Flexible fuels

'If you are burning both wood and smokeless fuels, look for a stove with a decent multifuel converting grate,' says Ced Wells, Director, Charnwood. 'Wood burns best on a flat bed of ash, while smokeless fuels burn more efficiently on an open grate where the air can draw up through the fuel. A converting grate that switches from open to flat will ensure you can easily and efficiently burn mixed fuels.'



## In control

'Gas stoves such as this are highly practical, emitting constant and consistent heat with the mere click of a remote control,' says Mark Robey, Owner, Robeys. 'An ultra-fine mesh protects the front glass against accidental knocks, while the light-coloured interior enhances the brightness of the flames. The stove also has a striking majolica cladding that's easy to maintain.'

## Danish welcome

"There's a certain cosiness – something the Danes refer to as "hygge" – that comes from sitting in front of a crackling wood stove, says Declan Walsh, Managing Director, Morsø. "The current trend is for contemporary, freestanding stoves with lots of glass to give the best view of the flames. Curved models like this one, are also popular."



lip

Look out for the terms 'clean burn', which means the stove efficiently burns off gases and particles that would otherwise go up the chimney, giving cleaner emissions, and 'airwash', which keeps the glass clean.

## Double aspect

'Open on both sides, this woodburning stove radiates heat throughout an open-plan space, transforming it with the flickering firelight,' says Corrabeth Bishop, Director, Ludlow Stoves. 'Double-sided stoves are ideal for central chimney stacks where each side of the hearth is visible – either in an open-plan room or in two separate rooms.'



## Bake well

'The heat and thermal efficiency of this stove can be harnessed for more than just warming your home,' says Dave Saunders, Technical and Standards Manager, Stovax (Lotus UK distributor). 'This version has a separate chamber above the firebox with shelves, just like a conventional oven - perfect for baking bread or as an extra oven if cooking for large numbers.'

## Plain sailing

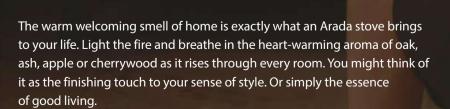
'A flush-fitting insert stove provides a neat look with clean lines, so it's ideal for a smaller room, especially if no surround or mantel is included,' says Mark Ryan, Marketing/Technical Manager, Jøtul. 'Fitting an insert stove is relatively simple nowadays; this one is designed for a UK standard fireplace opening, so replacing an existing fire is quite straightforward.'



## Country style need-to-know

- CALCULATE HEAT OUTPUT Before buying a woodburning stove, check that it has the correct output to suit your room. An online calculator will provide a rough guide if you fill in the dimensions of the room, but it's best to check with your supplier, because other factors, such as central heating also have a bearing.
- TRY A DIFFERENT LOOK Though black outclasses all others as an easy-to-live-with stove colour, ivory and cream shades are also sympathetic choices that will blend with your scheme, even if you later change the decor. For a broader country-inspired palette of on-trend slate, blue, leafy green, bronze and brown, take a look at Charnwood or Chesney's.
- CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENT A woodburner is an eco-friendly option for your home, since burning wood releases the same amount of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as is absorbed by the tree while it grows, making it a 'carbon-neutral' fuel. If you live in a smokeless zone, you'll need a stove that meets Defra standards for low emissions.

## OAK, CHERRY & AHINT OF SPICE For the love of that real fire smell.



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Putting warmth at the heart of the home

## Ovens built for entertaining

INTRODUCING THE LATEST BUILT-IN APPLIANCES THAT ARE TURKEY READY AND FULLY EQUIPPED TO MAKE CHRISTMAS COOKING A BREEZE



## BEST FOR ... Big birds Wolf, 125L, C-rated, £6,060

You'll struggle to find a turkey that won't fit in this ICBSO30PM/S/PH M-Series Single Oven (H72xW75.9x D58.4cm), which packs an impressive internal cavity of 125L. Wolf's Dual VertiCross Convection System also promises faster, more even cooking, while a digital temperature probe ensures food is thoroughly cooked.



## BEST FOR... Hassle-free cleaning Smeg, 65L, A-rated, £699

Pyrolytic cleaning brings the classic SFP6925PPZ Victoria Aesthetic oven (H58.8xW59.7x D54.8cm) right up to date. At the touch of a button, high temperatures (500°C) will turn grease and residue into ash, leaving you to get back to the festive celebrations. It also features 20 automatic programs and five cooking levels.



## BEST FOR... Juicy joints Whirlpool, 73L, A+ rated, £399

Enjoy delicious rotisserie-style roasts via the AKZM 755/IX (H59.5xW59.5x D56.4cm) oven's motorised turnspit, which automatically self-bastes meat for succulence. The Ready2Cook energy-saving function also eliminates the need to preheat the oven. Just put your food in, select the program and the oven does the rest.



## BEST FOR ... Easy access Caple, 65L, A-rated, £1,014

Side-opening access is far safer than reaching over a hot door to retrieve your roast turkey, and this C2160 oven (H59.4xW59.4xD53.5cm) also boasts closed-door grilling to keep cooking smells safely inside the oven. A boost facility speeds up cooking times, while turbo defrost takes the wait out of food thawing.



## BEST FOR ... Relaxed get-togethers Electrolux, 74L, A-rated, £1,259

Let your oven take the strain by choosing a fully automated model. The EOC5956AAX TFT (H59.4x W59.4xD56.7cm) oven's touch screen display with intuitive navigation offers 110 pre-set cooking programs and 50 recipes, including ingredients lists. Select a recipe, load in the ingredients and let the oven do the rest.

## **Country** style need-to-know

- SIZE IT UP Most standard 60cm-wide single ovens have around 60-65 litres of cooking space and can easily turn out a roast for four. For more capacity, consider installing two single ovens side by side, going double or opting for a 90cm-wide built-in oven, also called a pizza oven (try Miele).
- **SHELF LIFE** A high-capacity oven with two shelves will have less usable space than a smaller model with three shelves. Also check that the width of the oven interior fits your favourite baking pans and trays. Telescopic shelves extend outwards, making it safer to lift heavy pans.
- **HIGH PRECISION** If you want to be sure your turkey is cooked all the way through, but is not too dry, a meat probe is a useful feature - it monitors core temperatures and, on some models, turns the oven off when the desired results are reached. Also great for achieving perfectly rare, mediumor well-done roast beef and lamb.



reat the heart of your home to a new lease of life with the Cooke & Lewis ivory-framed Carisbrooke kitchen. This 21st-century take on the traditional farmhouse design brings Shaker style bang up to date, offering timeless looks with a contemporary twist.

Created with storage in mind, this beautiful kitchen is perfect for family life. From built-in wine racks and open-shelved crockery holders to ergonomic corner carousel units, there are plenty of storage solutions to choose from, whether you want to hide things away or put them on display.

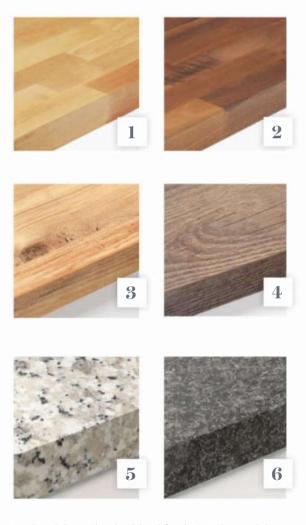
Kitchens can sometimes look boxy, but the Carisbrooke's design softens the look with its clean lines and elegant curves, making the kitchen feel relaxed and helping the flow of the room. Choose from up-to-the-minute painted finishes in soothing contemporary shades of Ivory (above), Cashmere (a soft, warm light grey) and Taupe (an on-trend mid grey, shown on the previous page), then personalise with your own finishing touches.

Larder-style cabinet storage
is the perfect way to
maximise space in a kitchen.
Combine cupboards with
drawers for a dresser-style
look that makes use of
wasted space under wall
units. Break up a run of units
with glazed cabinet doors
the attractive frosted glass
also allows items to be
found at a glance.



## Country-style WORKTOPS

From solid wood to granite, realistic laminates to gemstone and earthstone, B&Q's beautifully crafted worktops come in a variety of thicknesses and edging options



1 Birch, solid wood with a blond finish. 2 Walnut, solid wood that adds a rich warmth. 3 Mississippi Pine, a honey-coloured wood-effect laminate. 4 Mountain Timber, a realistic textured wood-effect laminate.
5 Granite Bianco Sardo, a pale granite from the bespoke range. 6 Granite Nero Impala, a durable natural stone granite from the bespoke range. »



othing beats the mellow tones of wood for creating a cosy, welcoming country kitchen that's brimming with homely character. And if you're looking for a modern classic design, The Cooke & Lewis Chesterton Solid Oak Classic is an effortlessly elegant Shaker-style kitchen that provides just enough decoration with its solid timber doors with inset centre panels to give a nod to period detail, while epitomising the essence of pared-back simplicity.

The beauty of the wood speaks for itself – the classically designed doors are made from solid oak that has been carefully selected for its quality, sustainability and unique character. Each piece of timber is slowly kiln dried to prevent warping, before being accurately machined to create the finished door, then sprayed with a protective lacquer to shield it from marks and fading, so it's an extremely practical choice especially if you have children or pets.

Whether you're looking for a freestanding retro fridge freezer, an American-style design or an integrated fridge freezer that can be concealed behind cabinet doors for a streamlined look, B&Q has a design you'll love in a size that will suit your way of life.



# Country-style TAPS

Taps aren't just functional, they can be a stylish addition to your kitchen, too. Choose a beautiful design that complements the look of your cabinets



1 Locone Chrome Finish. 2 Brita Kelda Chrome Effect.
3 Newport Chrome Finish. 4 Bonneville Chrome Effect Bridge
Mixer. 5 Franke Ascona Chrome Effect Monobloc. 6 Cooke
& Lewis Clyro Chrome Effect Concealed Pull Down Lever.



ountry houses often have an inherent period charm that demands a classic sophisticated kitchen design. A farmhouse kitchen is an obvious choice as it will blend seamlessly into a scheme with historic features such as inglenook fireplaces and beamed or high ceilings.

The Cooke & Lewis Woburn kitchen is the epitome of a modern farmhouse country kitchen with its intricate period detailing that gives it the charm of time gone by, brought up to date with contemporary

touches. Its soft cream finish evokes a homely feel, ensuring that it is equally suited to a small cottage, where the colour will maximise the light, or a larger, airy space, where it will add a touch of warmth.

In addition, because each door is hand-antiqued by a kitchen craftsman, it has a unique aged feel that oozes rustic individuality and creates a timeless heritage look. To ensure durability, each door is carefully sprayed with a protective lacquer to seal in the antique detail.

A plate rack is a quintessential ingredient in a country kitchen for displaying pretty plates within easy reach. The Woburn's traditional design combines space for both plate storage and a handy shelf above.



# Country-style RANGE COOKERS

B&Q has a fabulous choice of range cookers in a selection of colours and sizes as well as gas, electric and dual-fuel options to make the perfect partner for your kitchen



# Your dream kitchen made simple

FROM PLANNING A LAYOUT TO CHOOSING A DESIGN, B&Q OFFERS ALL THE EXPERT ADVICE YOU NEED

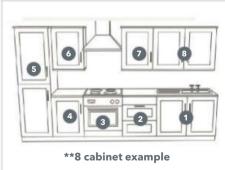


B&Q understands how daunting a kitchen project can be and its dedicated experts are there to help and to ensure that planning a kitchen doesn't take as long or cost as much as you might think.

Whether you need to update your kitchen or are planning to change the layout of your room, a new design will bring a new lease of life to your home. Work out how you would like to improve on your current kitchen and how you intend to use the space, for example, whether you want more

storage or an informal dining area.

Once you've decided, why not try B&Q's new interactive online design tool, Spaces, which makes designing your kitchen even easier. When you have a look you love, the high-tech 3D planning tool lets you keep an eye on your project even after you have left the store, and allows you to amend your preferences from home. What's more, Spaces updates the cost of your project as you change and edit your design. And, because the pricing is live, you know how much your kitchen will cost there and then.



- 1 1000mm Base Unit
- **2** 500mm Multi-drawer base unit
- **3** 600mm Built under oven housing unit
- **4** 500mm Base Unit
- 5 600mm Larder Unit
- **6** 500mm Wall Unit **7** 500mm Wall Unit
- 8 1000mm Wall Unit
- **Also included:** Base, wall and larder décor

end panels; 38mm thick 3m laminate worktop; cornice, light pelmet and continuous plinth; and handles.

Cooke & Lewis kitchens include clad on panels if kitchens include replacement end panels.

**Not included:** Oven, hob, sink and taps.

B&Q is committed to offering durable designs at competitive prices, with a 10-year guarantee, so if you find a comparable kitchen cheaper elsewhere, B&Q will beat the price by 10%. For more about B&Q's kitchens call 0333 014 3098 or visit diy.com/rooms/kitchen/fitted-kitchens/DIY998389.cat.





# 5 steps to THE PERFECT COUNTRY KITCHEN

Changing your kitchen is a big undertaking, so take a look at your space and decide whether you want a complete refit or whether some simple cosmetic changes, such as new cabinet doors or a new worktop, will give you a simple refresh that will make all the difference.

Write down a wishlist of things you would love to have in your kitchen and what you need to change - you may long for an informal eating area or a table that the kids can do their homework on, or you may have your heart set on an island with lots of extra storage. Make the space work for you and your lifestyle.

Take inspiration from around you. Scour magazines and brochures, research websites such as housetohome.co.uk and check out pinterest.com/bandq and Instagram. Then create a moodboard to collate all your ideas, including paint and fabric swatches.

Consult B&O's kitchen experts, who can give you ideas on design and suitable products. Pop in store or go online to diy.com/diy/design\_consultation. Then put your ideas together with B&O's Spaces tool.

-Add personality with ) finishing touches. Work out which handles you like - drawer pulls and knobs work well in a country kitchen. Worktops will impact on the look of your cabinets - solid wood adds a country touch, laminate provides a versatile alternative, while sophisticated granite is the durable option. Select freestanding appliances for a focal point or built-in appliances to keep the look streamlined. Hard-wearing flooring is a must in a country kitchen so choose from wood, stone, tiles or laminate.

# NEXT MONTH IN COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS

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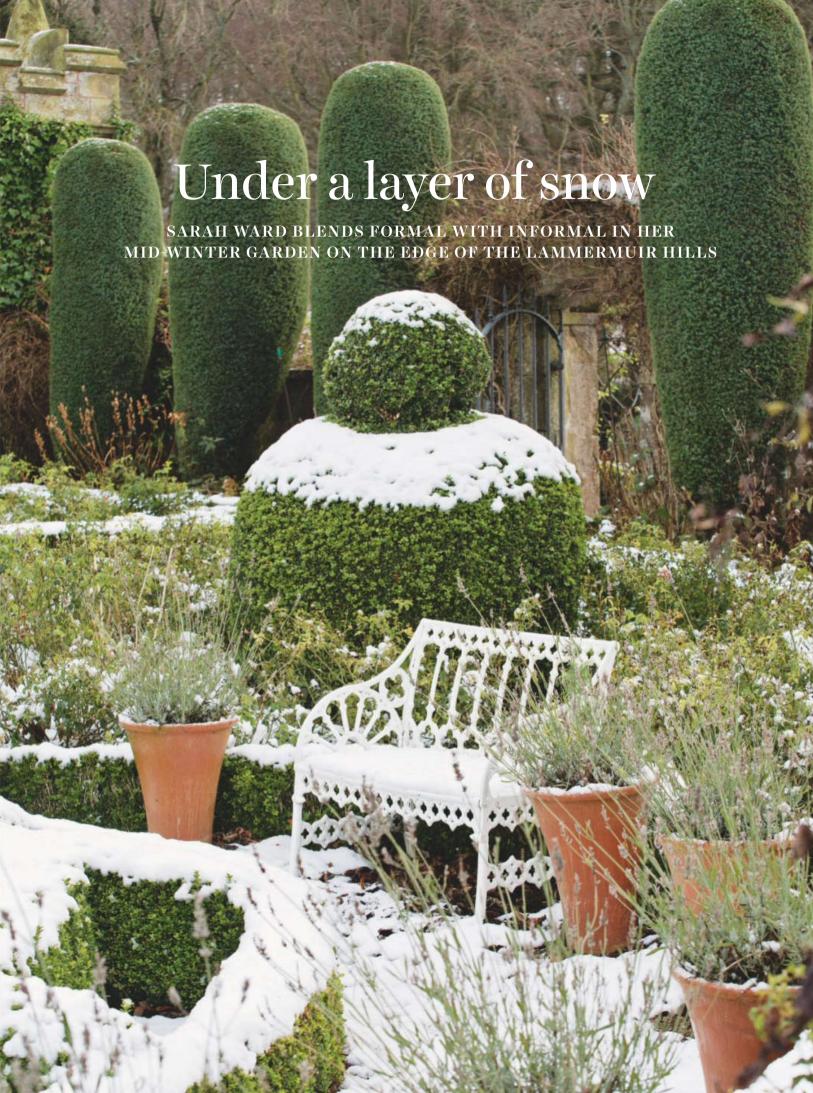






# New Year razzle-dazzle!

- Feel-the-glow celebrations with bronzed and burnished looks
- 'Let's entertain' ideas for parties Food that'll feed a crowd
  - Country homes made for winter get-togethers











#### AT HOME WITH...

Owners Sarah Ward, a volunteer on the East Lothian Children's Panel, and her husband Max, who is in the financial world. They live here with dogs Tilly, Crumble and Nell, plus donkeys, pigs, chickens and ducks. Grown-up children Laura, Charlie, Fred and Antonia often visit.

 ${\it House}$  Originally built as a farmhouse in the 1720s, Stobshiel has been much added to over the years.

Garden Walled garden of box, clematis, lavender and roses; pond; shrubberies; woodland garden.

Even in deepest winter stobshiel House is impressive, its five acres of gardens only adding to the sense of grandeur. The 18th-century house looks out on to a formal walled garden of box-edged beds and topiary. Beyond lie shrubberies, a kitchen garden, a pond and a woodland area planted in more informal style. Carpeted in snow - and Stobshiel is above the snowline on the edge of the Lammermuir Hills, so snow is common - there's a liveliness and warmth about this mid-winter scene.

The design may be classic, but there's nothing stuffy about the feel. This is partly because of the animals that have always been so much a part of life here - from donkeys and pigs to ducks, chickens and the family's beloved dogs - and also because of the statuary, pots and other pieces that enliven every corner.

When Sarah and Max Ward and their family moved to Stobshiel in 1992, there was not much garden save for the handsome walled garden leading away from the house. 'The previous owner had done it beautifully,' says Sarah. 'The box hedges were there, the castellated yew and the rose arches, and it was filled with herbaceous plants.' That seemed enough to cope with, but eventually the couple put in a pond at the front of the house and explored the woodland beyond.

'We could hear running water there but not see it, as it was covered in brambles. Having small children, I thought I had better find out where it was,' Sarah says. What emerged after clearance was a sparkling burn, and a rockery and waterfall built in the 1900s. The Wards created a long walk beyond the walled garden for >>





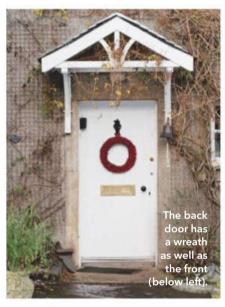


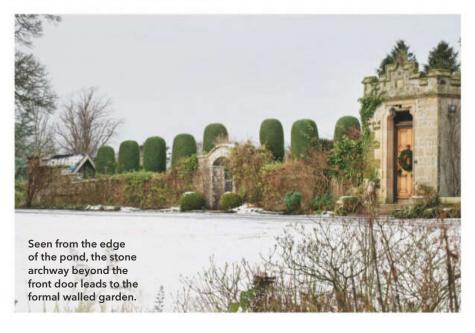
garden so special...

'It's a garden for all seasons because of its structure. Both house and garden are enjoyed by all the family.

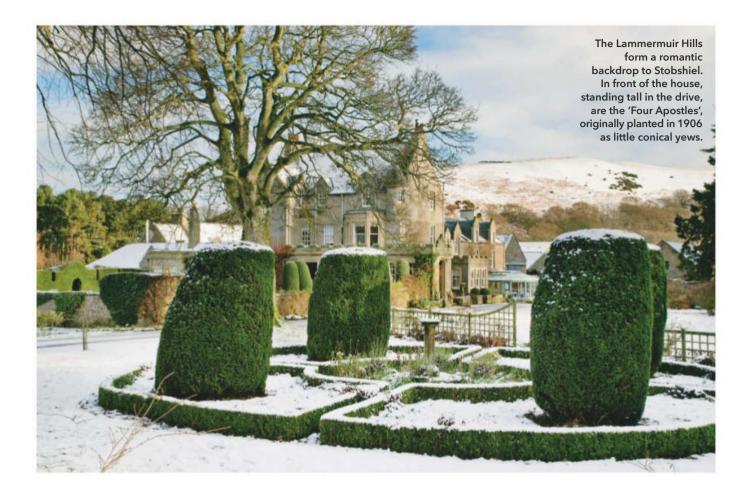
It's home!'

What makes the









# Modern Country Classic

# Winter structure

Create winter interest with strong lines and shapes.

#### Need to know...

- Crisp against the snow, box hedges and evergreen topiary make their mark when other plants have faded.
- Statuary and pots, obelisks, troughs and urns give a fillip to the garden all year round.
- Leave flowerheads for visual effect, also to protect against late frosts.
- In woodland, the white trunks of Betula utilis var. jacquemontii contrast beautifully against a dark backdrop of holly and laurel.
- Be bold with patterns of the same size pot, repeated topiary shapes, the same plant used by the dozen.
- Keep labels of what you plant, filed in alphabetical order, to keep track of your collection.

rhododendrons and azaleas, and reclaimed part of a field to make a shrubbery with a central 'doocot'. The dovecote is one of many decorative pieces that give Stobshiel structure and visual interest.

'Not long after moving here, I went to an auction and bought a number of stone statues,' says Sarah. 'They're not antique, but they've been "aged", and they're all over the place here – a lady gardener, a pair of stone boys, a girl holding a basket, a little boy.' She also brought in oil jars, urns and troughs, and among constant additions is an armillary sphere that Sarah gave to Max for their 25th wedding anniversary, and an irresistible sculpture of donkeys.

Stobshiel operates without a gardener but, early on, Sarah approached Pat Stevenson, who helped in the house, and said, 'Do you think we could manage the garden together?' Pat said yes, and the two have done the planning, planting, potting, weeding and fruit and vegetable growing ever since. They have weekly assistance with jobs that need extra muscle, and Max does the mowing. In May and September, expert David Linn comes to clip the topiary.

Inexperienced in the early days, Sarah and Pat now have the confidence to make bold decisions. The herbaceous borders in the centre of the walled garden had been a constant issue. 'We struggled with wind, heights, staking,' says Sarah. Then, four years ago, they came up with the radical solution of taking everything out there and planting Flower Carpet roses in blocks of white or deep pink. 'They're disease resistant, need no pruning and bloom continuously,' says Sarah. The only other plants in the walled garden are >>





crocuses and tulips that come through in spring and, later, blue agapanthus, plus clematis that grow on obelisks, one each for spring- and summer-flowering varieties. The walled garden now has strong, simple design and is the better for it.

Practicality is key to Stobshiel. In winter, the big Alitex greenhouse shelters tender plants such as pelargoniums, jasmine and auriculas. 'We used to heat it but no longer,' says Sarah. 'If we have a bad winter, we might lose the contents of the whole greenhouse, but it's cheaper, believe it or not, to go out and restock the plants or take cuttings than to keep the greenhouse heated all the time.'

Nothing stays still at Stobshiel. 'The fun side is thinking of new ideas and creating new bits,' says Sarah. 'This year, we've done an enormous amount in the woodland garden, taking out pontic rhododendrons and sycamore trees and completely replanting with multi-stem jacquemontii birches and masses of bulbs, native bluebells, erythroniums, primulas, meconopsis, trilliums, hostas and astilbes.' Plants are bought by the tray from Kevock Garden Plants (kevockgarden.co.uk) and put in by the tens and dozens.

Sarah is looking forward to seeing what comes up next spring - never a given, considering the weather and pheasants from round and about. 'Pheasants love bulbs, crocus bulbs especially, and they eat everything,' she says. 'But that's gardening in the country.'

Stobshiel House, Humbie, EH36 5PD, is open by appointment in aid of Circle (circle.scot). To visit, email stobshiel@gmail.com.



DOORSTEP... Visit... 'Haddington, a lovely

market town with nice shops and the River Tyne running through it. Nearby is historic Lennoxlove House (01620 823720 lennoxlove.com), home of the Duke of Hamilton.'

Shop at... 'Macplants Berrybank Nursery (01875 341179, macplants.co.uk) in Pencaitland. They are plant growers as well as sellers, and are good for everything.'

Go for a meal at... 'Humbie Hub Eatery, Humbie (01875 833262), a delightful community shop and café, for homemade lunches and teas, with an emphasis on locally produced food.'

# The beauty of British wool

# BE INSPIRED BY THE BEAUTY, QUALITY AND HERITAGE OF THIS NATURAL FIBRE IN THIS STUNNING NEW INTERIORS SHOWCASE

ritish wool is one of the nation's most valuable heritage materials. Reared in the highlands and lowlands of this country, over 60 breeds of native sheep produce sustainable, environmentally friendly and inherently warm wool.

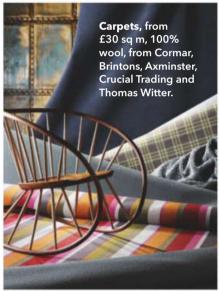
This year, the Campaign for Wool and British Wool are showcasing stunning weaves and home furnishings made using 100% British wool. Available from well-known interiors names, from Brintons to Heal's, this shortlist of stunning upholstery fabrics, carpets, rugs, cushions and throws aims to bring the story of British wool to the fore.

From the shearing of the fleece to the carding, spinning, dyeing and, finally, weaving of the wool, this is a journey that goes back generations and wouldn't be possible without the passion and pure talent of designers, weavers and manufacturers in the UK.

Inspired by the landscape photographer Ian Lawson's beautiful coffee-table book about Harris Tweed, From The Land Comes The Cloth, British Wool has brought together the colours and textures that reflect the natural landscape and habitat of British sheep in this interiors collection to help convey the importance of land, sheep farmers and their flocks to the textile industry.

Thanks to this commitment to rural lifestyles, the legacy of British Wool and the rich heritage of these textiles can continue to thrive and be enjoyed by you in your homes today.

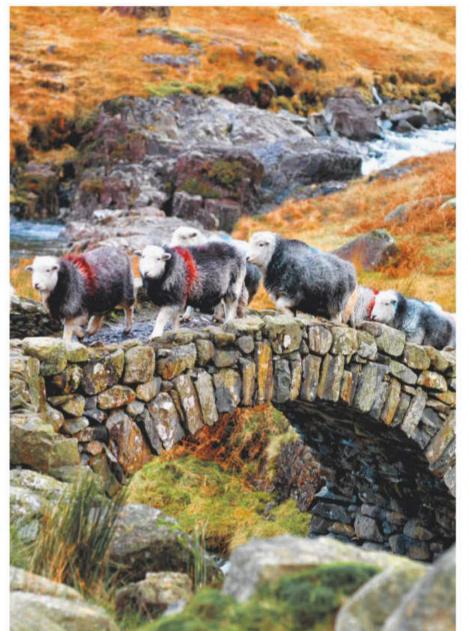
















#### READER OFFER

Receive a free set of six Hebridean art cards, worth £28, when you order Ian Lawson's book From

The Land Comes The Gloth Harris

Tweed Glassic Edition, £135. Visit ianlawson.com and quote CH&I in the Order Notes box at the checkout to claim your free gift. Offer ends 15 December 2015. Terms and conditions apply. See website for details.



For more information about the Campaign for Wool and British Wool, call 01274 688666 or visit britishwool.org.uk.









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# Make life lovely

FASHION, WELLBEING, ECO, PETS, TRAVEL AND OTHER NICE THINGS

# Join an online knitting group

Whether you're new to knitting or a pattern pro, here are some online 'close-knit' communities you can click on to...

#### Knitting Haven

Struggling with a new stitch? Have a natter with fellow knitters



of all levels in this friendly forum to help you gain valuable insight and advice. Visit knittinghaven.com.

**Craftsy** Fancy learning new techniques? These web-based knit-alongs are just the thing. Watch videos featuring expert instructors who can provide feedback. Visit craftsy.com.

Love Knitting Post pictures of your latest knits here, and browse and comment on what others have created, too. Visit loveknitting.com.



# 3 Pull on a Christmas knit

A festive jumper doesn't necessarily have to be covered in reindeers or snowmen. Choose a crisp red and white stripe to keep you cosy on your Christmas morning walk – we love the relaxed hand-knitted look of this cute number, teamed with a cosy snood for an extra layer of warmth.

# DECK THE HALLS

Looking to spruce up your Christmas decorations this year? Create rustic wreaths, garlands and centrepieces for the festivities, using freshly picked greenery, grown and harvested at Rocket Farm in West Cornwall. Delivered direct to your front door, the festive selection includes mistletoe, ivy, holly and more, with prices starting at £19.99 for a standard box. Visit rocketgardens.co.uk to order.



As the proud owners of three horses, husband and wife team Belle and Mike were inspired to make 100% natural grooming products. This post-exercise Winter Warmer wash contains cinnamon, cloves and ginger to soothe tired muscles - the horse's not yours! £6.50, Hawkins Organic. >>>



# THIS MONTH'S OFFERS FROM

& INTERIORS

# **Escorted Italian lakes tours**

# Selected departures from April to October 2016



## Lakes Maggiore and Orta, plus the Matterhorn

Eight days' half-board from £879 per person. Visit Lake Maggiore, which straddles the border between Italy and Switzerland.

What's included \* Return flights from most UK airports; taxes and transfers. \* Seven nights' half-board stay in a four-star hotel. \* A visit to Isola Bella, Zermatt in the Swiss Alps, viewing the Matterhorn, Lakes Como and Orta, plus Orta San Giulio. 🗱 A Centovalli rail journey and a lake cruise. \* Escorted by an experienced tour manager.



## Lake Como, St Moritz and the **Bernina Express train** Eight days' half-board from £829 per

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What's included \* Return flights from most UK airports; taxes and transfers. \* Seven nights' half-board stay in four-star hotels. \* Sightseeing, including St Moritz; a Bernina Express rail journey and Lake Maggiore. \* A lake cruise to Bellagio and a private visit to Villa del Balbianello. \* Escorted by an experienced tour manager.



#### Lake Garda, Venice and Verona Eight days' half-board from £599 per

person. Discover some of the finest sights northern Italy has to offer.

What's included \* Return flights from most UK airports; taxes and transfers. \* Seven nights' half-board stay in hand-picked lake-front hotels. \* Tour of beautiful Lake Garda. \* Guided sightseeing tour of medieval Verona. \* Tour of the Dolomites. \* Guided sightseeing in Venice. \* Escorted by an experienced tour manager.

# To book or request a brochure Call 01283 523454 or visit cohriviera.co.uk

Prices are per person, from, based on two sharing and subject to finite availability. Additional entrance costs may apply. Images used in conjunction with Riviera Travel. Offers operated by and subject to the booking conditions of Riviera Travel Ltd.

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# Cooks Professional Nutriblend 700W blender in Black

# From only £49.99, save up to £70



**Extract the nutrients and** vitamins from fruit, vegetables, nuts and seeds at the flick of a

switch. This blender chops and grinds whole fruit and veg, including skins, seeds and stems, to ensure that all the goodness remains within the juice. Both the 10- and 15-piece sets include a recipe book and tumblers, so you can just blend and go. Covered by the Cooks

Professional two-year warranty.

\* 10-piece set includes the blender, one 700ml and two 350ml tumblers, blender blade, grinder blade, two tumbler handles and two stay-fresh lids, £49.99 (was £99.99). Code D8459.

\* 15-piece set includes the blender, three 700ml and two 350ml tumblers, blender blade, grinder blade, two travel lids, two tumbler handles and three stay-fresh lids,

£59.99 (was £129.99). Code D8471.

# How to order

**By phone** Call 0871 911 7011\*, quoting 54440 Online Visit clifford-james.co.uk/54440

\*Calls cost 13p a minute plus your phone company's access charge. P&P costs £4.95 per order. 'Was' pricing refers to original selling prices offered on the promoter's website, cjoffers.co.uk, and in its retail store between 20/07/15 and 20/10/15. Offer subject to availability and open to residents on the UK mainland only. Please allow seven working days for delivery. Return faulty/unused goods within 30 days, in the resealed original packaging for a refund or replacement. Please note that postage is not refunded on unsuitable items or cancelled orders. Cards will be charged by, and your contract for supply of goods is with, BVG Airflo, a company wholly independent of Country Homes & Interiors, published by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd.

# 5 Burn a yule log

WE LOVE THE CHARMING RITUALS AND SUPERSTITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS ANCIENT CHRISTMAS CUSTOM. HERE'S WHAT YOU DO...

Choose a tree with friends and family; the oldest and youngest among you should make the decision. In the old days oak was popular, as it represented healing and wisdom.

Fell and chop the tree.

People used to burn



entire trunks bit by bit until Twelfth Night, but over time, pieces were shared out - and so the vule log was born. Lay the fire, with the log in the centre, on Christmas Eve. Sprinkle with salt and wine (the wine also makes it smell nice), toss on a holly leaf and make a wish. Keep it alight for as long as possible - to let a vule log go out before Twelfth Night used to be considered bad luck. Throw the ashes on your veg patch to ensure a good growing season. For oak yule logs, visit certainlywood.co.uk.





# Buy British

Best known for its iconic range of toasters and kettles, West Sussex-based manufacturer Dualit celebrates its 70th anniversary this year with two jazzy new colourways, Brass (above) and Midnight Blue. The skilled team of this family business, some of whom have worked at the company for over 20 years, is dedicated to producing the same standards instilled by founder Max Gort-Barten in 1945. Each toaster is hand-built by the same craftsman from start to finish and features the maker's name on the base plate.

# 18 Hang a homespun stocking

Decorate your mantelpiece with one of these beautiful stockings and help rural craftswomen in Bangladesh build better lives for their families. Available from

Decorator's
Notebook for just
£19.95, each one
is unique and
sewn by hand,
using vintage
saris. A lovely
surprise for
Christmas.



# 9 PLANNING A SPOT OF MINCE PIE MAKING?

Include cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg to represent the Three Wise Men. Tradition has it that eating a mince pie on each of the Twelve Days of Christmas guarantees good fortune. Well, if you insist! »

# To on a festive shopping weekend

MAKE AN OCCASION OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT BUYING WITH AN OVERNIGHT STAY IN A STYLISH HOTEL



## MIDDLETHORPE HALL, YORK, NORTH YORKSHIRE

#### We love it because...

If you want to shop in York but prefer to stay away from the centre, Middlethorpe Hall, a William and Mary country house hotel. can't be beat. Owned by the National Trust, it's a great base for visiting the Yorkshire Dales, too.

## What is the accommodation like?

Traditional-style rooms, period features and magnificent gardens set the tone in this stately Downton Abbey-esque abode. Dining here is a lovely experience, too, with a tempting menu of modern English food. Where to shop? Head to York, where a festive feel can be found in the

characterful shops along The Shambles, made all the more inviting by strings twinkly lights glowing from timber-framed buildings. Dart down the side streets to find more independent gems. How much? From £199 for a double room, including breakfast.

Middlethorpe Hall, 01904641241, middlethorpe.com.



# THE MERRION. DUBLIN, IRELAND

#### We love it because...

This elegant Dublin townhouse has a relaxed vibe and nothing is too much trouble for the friendly staff. It's right on the doorstep of shops and galleries, and parks for winter walks.

## What is the accommodation like?

Choose from garden rooms in the courtyard or spacious suites in the splendid main building. Where to shop? Designer stores are just around the corner on Grafton Street, while Powerscourt



Townhouse on South William Street offers independent shops selling beautiful art, crafts and interiors goodies.

How much? From €275 for a double room, including breakfast.

The Merrion, 00353 1603 0600, merrionhotel.com.

# THE GAINSBOROUGH, BATH, SOMERSET

#### We love it because...

This newly opened hotel is set within two listed buildings in the heart of this World Heritage Site, close to the Roman Baths.

## What is the accommodation like?

Palatial rooms and sumptuous style abound. Enjoy Michelin-starred food, sip winter cocktails and soak in the hotel's thermal spa pools.

Where to shop? A short stroll towards Bath Abbey leads you to the Christmas Market (26 November to 13 December), where you can warm

up with mulled wine and source artisan gifts. Or head to the Milsom Quarter for shops among Georgian streets and charming courtyards.

How much? From £310 for a double room, with breakfast.

The Gainsborough, 01225 358888, thegainsborough bathspa.co.uk.



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TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS DISCOUNT ON BEAUTIFUL TEXTILES FOR YOUR COUNTRY HOME – THE PERFECT WAY TO DO YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING!







**TERMS AND CONDITIONS** The 20% off sale is on recommended retail price only and is subject to stock availability. The offer will run from Tuesday 27 October to Wednesday 2 December 2015. The 20% off sale excludes carpet and furniture. We will aim to ship all orders received in the sale within five working days. However, dependent on stock quantities, there may be a longer lead time. Orders sent to overseas customers are sent on a delivery duty unpaid basis. Margo Selby Ltd does not accept any liability for additional taxes and charges relating to clearing your goods through customs. Standard returns policies apply. See margoselby.com for terms and conditions.

olourful and distinctive, Margo Selby's woven textiles, produced by her own design studio, have a modern edge which will enhance and blend perfectly in country interiors. Her design philosophy is about pushing the boundaries of weaving by uniting the very best weavers with high-quality fibres, including British Wool, to create beautifully crafted products.

Margo's expertise in weaving is central to the whole design process. This begins with hand-woven textile concepts, which are then developed with specialist mills and artisan weavers. The result is an exciting range of textile products in a vibrant mix of colours and geometric motifs, including furnishing fabric and accessories such as cushions, throws, towels and rugs. Margo's textile designs work effortlessly with both classic and contemporary styles, and so will add a luxurious and vibrant modern edge to your country home.

## How to claim your discount

Shop online at margoselby.com and enter the code CHI2015 at the checkout to claim your 20% off Margo Selby products.



MARGO SELBY

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# COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS

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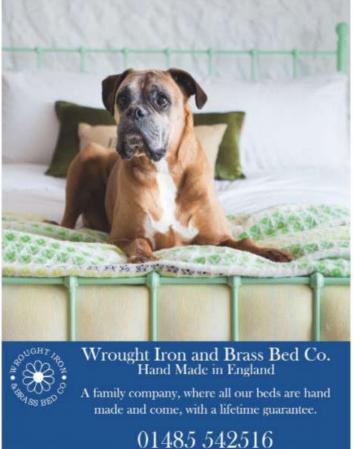
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Floorcovering shown: Wool Fabulous, one of many beautiful, tactile designs within our extensive Wool range.

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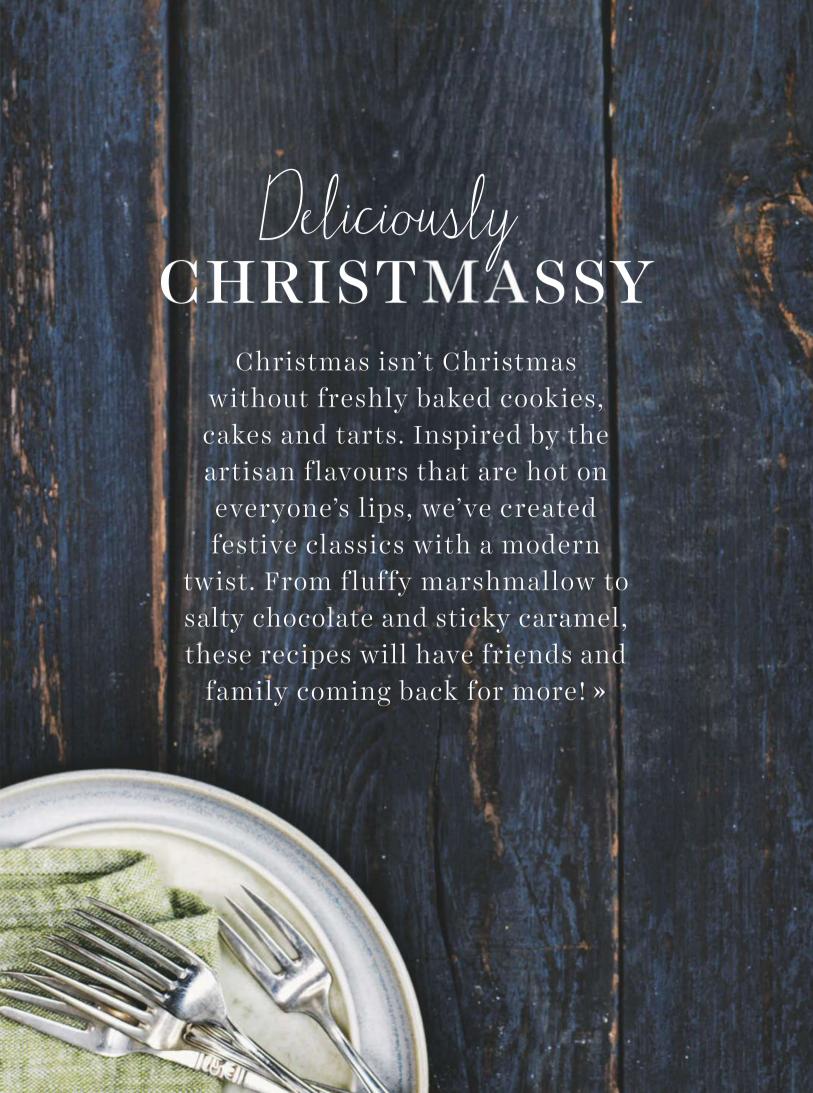
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## SALTED CHOCOLATE AND ALMOND TART

A delicious mix of dark chocolate, almonds, and a sprinkle of sea salt in a sweet pastry case. SERVES 10-12

For the sweet pastry

175g plain flour, plus extra for dusting 100g firm, slightly salted butter 75g icing sugar 2 medium egg yolks For the filling

50g blanched almonds, finely chopped 400g good-quality plain chocolate, chopped into small pieces 300ml double cream 100g light muscovado sugar 1 tsp sea salt flakes, plus a little extra to sprinkle 50g butter, diced Edible flowers, to decorate

Crème fraîche or lightly whipped cream, to serve

- 1 Put the flour in a food processor and add the butter, cut into small pieces. Blend until the mixture resembles coarse breadcrumbs. Briefly blend in the icing sugar to combine. Add the egg yolks and 1 tsp cold water and mix to a smooth dough. Wrap in a polythene bag and chill for 1 hour.
- 2 Preheat the oven to 190°C/Fan 170°C/Gas 5. Thinly roll out the dough on a lightly floured surface and use to line a 25cm round loosebased tart tin. Fit the pastry up the sides and trim off the excess. Line with baking parchment and baking beans, and bake blind for 20 minutes. Remove the paper and beans, and bake for a further 5 minutes. Leave to cool. 3 Scatter the chopped almonds into the pastry case. Put the chocolate in a heatproof bowl. Place the cream, sugar and salt in a small saucepan and heat gently until the sugar dissolves. Raise the heat and cook until the cream is bubbling around the sides of the pan but not rising up. Pour the cream mixture over the chocolate and leave to stand for a few minutes, stirring a couple of times until the chocolate has melted. Add the diced butter to the mixture and stir until melted. Pour into the pastry case and spread evenly. Leave to set. 4 To serve, sprinkle with a little extra sea salt and scatter with edible flowers to decorate.

Serve with crème fraîche or whipped cream.

# CHERRY, HAZELNUT AND ALMOND PANFORTE

Panforte is a classic Italian Christmas cake. crammed full of dried fruit, nuts and chocolate. MAKES 12-15 PIECES

150g almonds 100g hazelnuts 100g dried cherries Finely grated zest of 1 orange 75g plain flour 1 tbsp cocoa powder ½ tsp each of ground cinnamon, mixed spice and nutmeg 1/4 tsp each of ground cloves and freshly ground black pepper 125g caster sugar 250g clear honey 40g butter Icing sugar, for dusting

- 1 Preheat the oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/Gas 4. Line a 15cm square shallow baking tin or cake tin with baking parchment. Scatter the almonds and hazelnuts on a baking sheet and bake for 15 minutes until toasted. Reduce the oven temperature to 150°C/Fan 130°C/Gas 2.
- 2 Roughly chop the nuts and transfer to a bowl. Stir in the cherries, orange zest, flour, cocoa powder and all the spices.
- 3 Place the sugar, honey and butter in a small saucepan and heat gently until everything has dissolved. Bring to the boil and continue to boil for 2-3 minutes or until the syrup reaches 117°C on a sugar thermometer. (If you don't have a thermometer, drop a teaspoonful of the boiling syrup into a bowl of cold water. Leave for a few seconds then scoop up the syrup and roll between your fingers. It should form a soft ball.)
- 4 Pour the syrup into the bowl of dry ingredients and mix well. Working quickly, tip the mixture into the tin and press into an even layer. It might be easiest to pack it down with the back of a wet metal spoon. Bake for 30 minutes. The cake will look soft and syrupy but will firm up as it cools. Leave to cool in the tin. Transfer to a board and dust with icing sugar. Serve cut into small rectangles. Cook's tip Panforte is best served in small portions. It will keep well in an airtight container for a couple of weeks.



#### VANILLA STAR BISCUITS

These Christmas cookies are simplicity itself and are lovely served with coffee mid morning or at the end of an evening meal.

MAKES 15-20

275g plain flour, plus extra for dusting 200g firm, slightly salted butter 100g icing sugar, plus extra for dusting 2 medium egg yolks 1 tsp vanilla bean paste

- 1 Put the flour in a food processor and add the butter, cut into small pieces. Blend until the mixture resembles coarse breadcrumbs. Add the icing sugar, egg yolks and vanilla bean paste and blend again until the mixture comes together to form a smooth dough. Wrap the dough in a polythene bag and chill in the fridge for 1 hour.
- 2 Preheat the oven to 190°C/Fan 170°C/Gas 5. Line 2 large baking sheets with baking parchment. Roll out the dough on a surface dusted with flour to a thickness of about 5mm. Cut out stars (or other festive shapes such as Christmas trees or holly leaves) with a cookie cutter. Transfer to the baking sheets, spacing them slightly apart, and re-roll the trimmings to make extra biscuits.
- 3 Bake for 8-10 minutes or until they are a pale golden colour around the edges. Transfer to a wire rack and leave them to cool. Store in an airtight container for 2-3 days. Serve dusted with icing sugar.

Cook's tip If the biscuits lose their 'snap' during storage, place on a baking sheet and pop them back in a moderate oven for a few minutes.

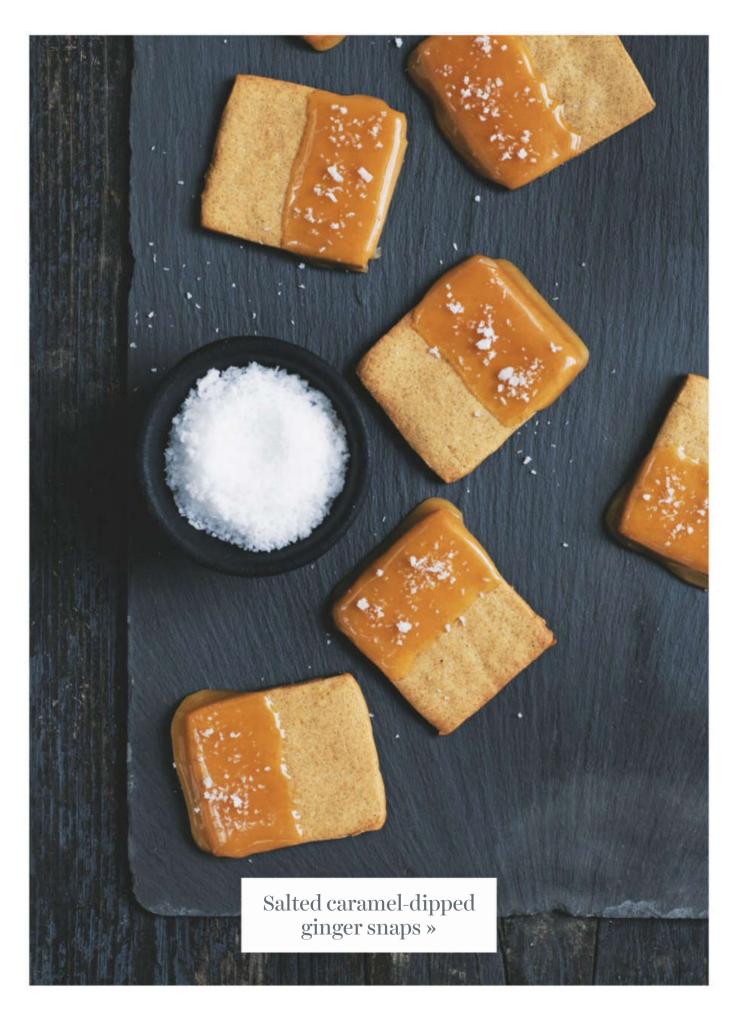
# MERINGUE TOPPED STICKY DATE CAKE

This decadent sponge is topped with a light layer of swirly, marshmallowy meringue - two scrumptious cakes in one showstopper. SERVES 10-12

200g dates, roughly chopped 100g plain chocolate, broken into pieces 125g slightly salted butter, softened 150g dark muscovado sugar 2 tsp vanilla bean paste or extract 3 medium eggs

200g self-raising flour 1 tsp baking powder 100g pecans, roughly chopped For the topping 2 medium egg whites 100g caster sugar Icing sugar, for dusting (optional)

- 1 Preheat the oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/Gas 4. Grease and line the base and sides of a 22-23cm round cake tin with greaseproof paper, then grease the paper as well. Put the dates in a saucepan with 150ml water. Heat until simmering, then cook for 5 minutes until the dates are soft and pulpy. Remove the pan from the heat and leave to stand for 5 minutes. Stir in the chocolate until it has melted. Leave to cool.
- 2 Put the butter, sugar, vanilla, eggs, flour and baking powder in a bowl and beat with a hand-held electric whisk until smooth and creamy. Add the chopped pecans and date mixture and stir well until the ingredients are evenly combined.
- 3 Turn the mixture into the tin and level the surface. Bake for 35-40 minutes until just firm to the touch. A skewer inserted into the centre should come out clean. Leave the sponge to cool in the tin.
- 4 To make the topping, preheat the oven to 230°C/Fan 210°C/Gas 8. Peel the lining paper away from the cake and place the cake on a baking sheet. Whisk the egg whites in a thoroughly clean bowl until they form peaks. Gradually add the sugar, a spoonful at a time, whisking the meringue well in between each spoonful of sugar. The mixture should look thick and glossy. Transfer the meringue mixture into a large piping bag fitted with a large plain nozzle. Pipe blobs of meringue all over the cake. (Alternatively, you can spread the meringue over the top of the cake, swirling it into peaks with a palette knife.) Place in the oven for 6-8 minutes until the topping turns a deep golden colour. Watch closely, as the meringue will quickly burn if left too long. Remove from the oven and leave to cool. Serve lightly dusted with icing sugar, if desired. Cook's tip Make the cake well in advance of Christmas and freeze. Thaw overnight before topping with the meringue and toasting in the oven before serving.



# FEATURE SARAH WILSON RECIPES JOANNA FARROW **STYLING** MAI KNAUER/HOUSE OF PICTURES PHOTOGRAPHS COLUMBUS LETH/HOUSE OF PICTURES

## SALTED CARAMEL-DIPPED GINGER SNAPS

These extra-special ginger snap biscuits get a makeover with salted caramel.

MAKES 25

200g plain flour, plus extra for dusting 50g cornflour 1½ tsp ground ginger 175g firm, slightly salted butter 75g caster or light muscovado sugar For the caramel

125g caster sugar 100ml double cream 25g butter Sea salt flakes, to sprinkle

1 Put both flours in a food processor with the ginger and add the butter, cut into small pieces. Blend until the mixture resembles coarse breadcrumbs. Add the sugar and blend again until the mixture forms a smooth dough. Shape into a rectangular block. Wrap in a polythene bag and chill for 1 hour. 2 Preheat the oven to 190°C/Fan 170°C/Gas 5. Line a large baking sheet with parchment. Roll out the dough on a surface dusted with flour to a neat rectangle measuring 32x24cm. Trim any uneven edges. Cut the dough into 5 strips lengthways, then cut into 5, widthways, to make 25 rectangles. Transfer to the baking sheet, spacing the biscuits slightly apart, and bake for about 15 minutes until pale golden. Cool on a wire rack. 3 To make the caramel, put the sugar in a small heavy-based saucepan with 3 tbsp water and heat gently until the sugar has completely dissolved. Bring to the boil and cook without stirring for about 5 minutes until a rich amber colour. Watch the syrup closely, as it can quickly overcook and turn bitter. Remove from the heat and pour in the cream. (The syrup will solidify and splutter.) Add the butter and return to the heat. Cook gently, stirring occasionally, until the caramel is smooth and creamy. Leave to cool slightly.

**4** Dip half of each biscuit into the caramel. Set down and sprinkle lightly with sea salt. Cook's tip The biscuits will store well in an airtight container for several days if you want to do the caramel at a later stage.

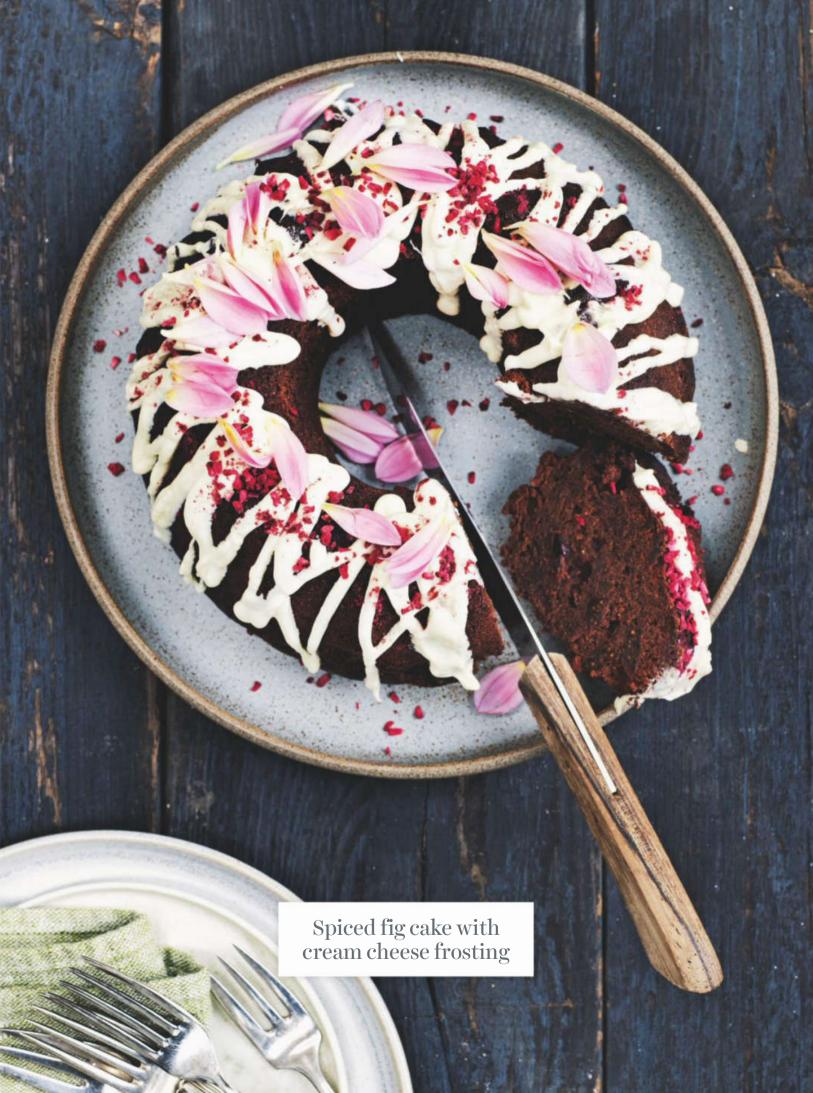
## SPICED FIG CAKE WITH CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

This rich cake, topped with a light frosting, is sure to become a new Christmas classic in your home. SERVES 10

A little melted butter, for greasing 400g plain flour, plus extra for dusting 2 tsp baking powder 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda 1 tsp ground allspice 250g dried figs, stalks removed, and roughly chopped 175q slightly salted butter 225g dark muscovado sugar 125g black treacle 300ml milk 2 medium eggs, lightly beaten 3 pieces stem ginger in syrup, grated For the frosting

150g full-fat cream cheese 25g butter, very soft 75g icing sugar Crystallised rose petals or freeze-dried strawberries, finely chopped, and edible flowers, to decorate

- 1 Preheat the oven to 160°C/Fan 140°C/Gas 3. Brush the base and sides of a 2-litre capacity ring tin with a little melted butter, and dust with flour, shaking off the excess. Put the flour, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda, allspice and dried figs in a bowl.
- 2 In a saucepan, gently heat the butter, sugar and treacle until the sugar has dissolved. Stir to blend the ingredients. Remove from the heat and pour in the milk, stirring until thoroughly combined. Add the beaten egg and stem ginger, and stir into the dry ingredients. Make sure no lumps of flour remain.
- **3** Turn the mixture into the tin. Bake for 50-60 minutes until the surface feels firm to the touch and a skewer inserted into the cake comes out clean. Loosen the edges of the cake and leave to cool in the tin.
- 4 Beat together the cream cheese, butter and icing sugar until smooth. Spoon into a piping bag fitted with a plain nozzle. Place the cake on a serving plate and pipe the frosting over the top. Scatter with crystallised rose petals, crushed dried strawberries or edible flowers.









# 'MY DECORATIONS HAVE A SIMPLE AND NAIVE STYLE'

# Christmas bauble maker Lisa Wright

love painting happy things,' says Lisa Wright of Polkadot. 'My ceramic and papier mâché Christmas baubles feature everything from robins and holly to festive fairy cakes.' In the summer, when Christmas isn't even on the horizon for most people, Lisa is hard at work in her cottage in the Buckinghamshire countryside, designing and painting her new season's Christmas decorations, including baubles, vintage-style cotton reels, signs and tags.

'Christmas does seem to go on all year round in our house,' she says. 'I concentrate on painting in the summer and then the lead-up to Christmas is my busiest time as I go to craft fairs to sell my decorations. We have been known to have our tree up for the entire year, and we always have baubles in the window. I do love Christmas!'

Lisa has long had a gift for art. 'As a child I was always doodling. My dad had Romany heritage and I joke that I inherited the arty side while my brother ended up with the wanderlust! I studied Art at A Level, but didn't think that I could make a career out of it and so I got a job and got married.'

But, after Lisa's daughter Sophie, now 20, was born, her creative streak resurfaced. 'Sophie was four when I started painting again. I created murals in her bedroom and signs for her door, as well as presents for her friends. When other mums asked if I could paint things for them, it gave me the confidence to pursue it further.'

After a year, Lisa started selling her work, mainly child-orientated artwork, such as canvases and decorations, at school fairs. But when she began selling to shops and wholesalers, that was the turning point. She approached local stores that might sell things on a sale-or-return basis at first, then the wholesale side became a regular monthly income and she was able to quit her day job working at a home for the elderly.

'Sophie was at school by now and I >>



# What I love most ...

# 'THE FLEXIBILITY AND THE FACT THAT I CAN WORK FROM HOME AFTER BEING TIED TO A SHOP FOR SO LONG'

would paint in the evenings. We'd sit at the table and she would draw while I painted. I also bought a kiln and made a range of mugs featuring my illustrations.'

Then just over 10 years ago, the owner of the main shop Lisa sold to moved away and the lease came up, so she took it over. 'I hadn't intended to run a shop, but it was too good an opportunity to miss,' she says. 'All in all, I had the shop for eight years. I started off in a tiny bow-fronted place and then moved to bigger premises. I mainly sold my own work and I had an area at the back that was a studio, so customers could come in and see me making things, and I made items to commission.'

Lisa closed the shop two years ago when the lease came up for renewal and the rent went up by 50%. 'I loved running it, but I needed a change,' she says. 'It was open six days a week and one Sunday a

month for the local farmers' market, so it was a huge commitment.'

The shop was called Polkadot, a name Lisa loved, and so she retained it for her decoration business. 'I knew a year before that I wouldn't renew the lease on the shop, so I built up a website and worked hard to retain the loyal customer base I had.' And she kept costs down by designing the website herself. 'I found a template I liked that suited the business. It was quite easy after that. I had established a brand by then.'

The best thing for the business in terms of social media has been having a Facebook business page. 'I have 6,500 followers, which, for a small business, is a fair number of people - I wouldn't have reached that number with the shop.'

Lisa also promotes the brand by going to fairs and shows. 'Attending an event is as much about marketing as sales. I am often approached by shops asking if I would like to supply them. It can be lonely working from home, so it's also a great way to stay in contact with customers and it's helpful to get a personal reaction. I sometimes take my paints with me and set up a little corner where I can demonstrate. People often don't realise that everything I sell is handpainted, so it's the perfect way to show them.'

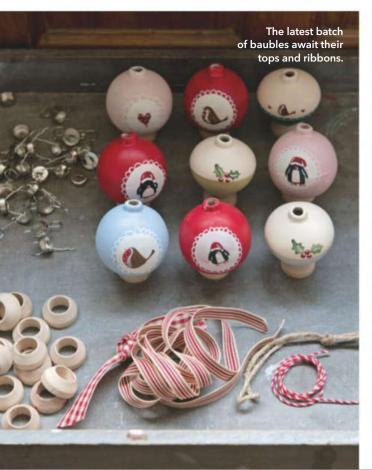
Polkadot has increasingly become a family business. 'A lot of coppicing takes place near where we live and so my husband, Matt, chops wood and I use the tree slices to make my signs,' says Lisa. And daughter Sophie has now joined the business, too, helping Lisa with personalised paintings and decorations all year round.

'I have quite an identifiable style simple and naive. I like stylised painting with a soft edge and a vintage feel. I love using colour, from lime greens to pastels, as well as reds and greens. Among my favourite motifs to paint are roses - I think that's a throwback to my Romany roots!'

Polkadot, polkadotwinslow.com. >>



#### MY COUNTRY BUSINESS

















## Small business advice

### BEING SUCCESSFUL AT CRAFT FAIRS

Follow our straightforward guide to getting the most out of a market







Selling at a craft fair is something every maker should try. 'It's an opportunity to meet customers, see people's reactions to your work and test products... and that's before you even get any sales!' says Camilla Westergaard, of online marketplace Folksy (folksy.com). 'But there are also some drawbacks: you need to make a lot of stock in advance, and days spent standing, carrying and talking can be physically exhausting. Plus, if you pick the wrong fair or it doesn't pull in the crowds, you can be left feeling demoralised.' Here are Camilla's tips to get the most out of a market.

Do your research. 'It's really important that you pick the right fair for your work. Although inexpensive local fairs can be tempting, consider whether they are really the right market for your work. What's the footfall? Who else is selling there? Is it handmade only, or will you have to compete with bought-in items? Do the customers understand the value of handmade or are they just there to pick up bargains? How likely is it that any of your target market customers will be there?'

Visit the fair beforehand. 'Check out the market before you sign up and talk to the stallholders to canvas their opinion. Sometimes the best markets for you might be further afield, and possibly more expensive, but the more established they are, the more likely you are to be successful there.'

Tell people you're going. 'Good craft fairs will have their own PR in place, but that doesn't mean you should rely entirely on them - you need to put in some leg work, too. Hand out any fliers they send you and share news about the fair on your social media channels. If you have a blog, could you write a post picking out your favourite products by other makers who will also be there. That will help get them talking about you and the event, too.'

Consider your collection. 'Craft fairs are a great opportunity to look at your products and see if there are any gaps. Set up a practice stall and look at it from a buyer's perspective. Is there anything that seems out of place, or a product you think is missing? Don't be afraid to show only a selection of your range – you don't need to display everything at once! Make extras of your most popular products so you can replenish your display when things sell.'

Think about your display. 'It's your shop window. The best market stalls are full of tempting products, without looking crowded. It can be a tricky balance to get right; don't think you'll sell more if there's more choice - it's just as likely to

put people off. Add height with shelves and cabinets, or use the backdrop so when the market gets busy, there's something to look at over the heads of other customers. Make sure any props you use match your brand.'

Have clear signage. 'For many people, this is the first time they will have seen your work, so this is a must. You can make your own, but ensure it looks professional and shows off your brand. Think about having a leaflet or postcard printed that tells people a little bit about yourself and your work - many people won't understand the processes you use in your work and may not even realise you've made it yourself.'

What about price points? 'Imagine you had a specific budget and needed to buy a present. What would you buy and who for? If your items are mostly high-value, could you offer something for a smaller budget? For example, if you sell cushions, could you also sell pocket mirrors featuring your designs?'

Come equipped. 'Make a list of the essentials - cash float, sales book, business cards, paper bags, bubble wrap - and don't forget things like water, wet wipes and mints. It can be a long day, but stay as approachable as possible. Stand up and don't hide behind your stall on your phone!'

The one lesson I've learned...

'TO SAY NO. YOU THINK YOU HAVE TO ACCEPT EVERY COMMISSION AND GO TO EVERY FAIR, BUT YOU COULD END UP WORKING 24 HOURS A DAY'

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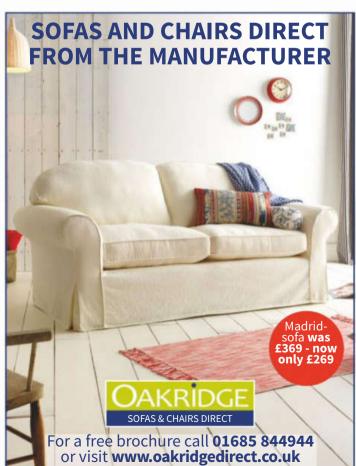






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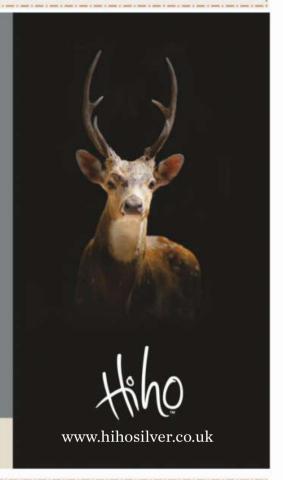


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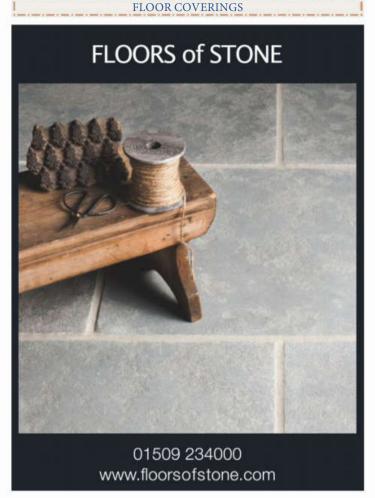


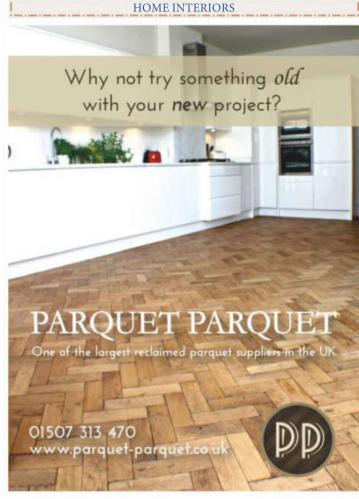
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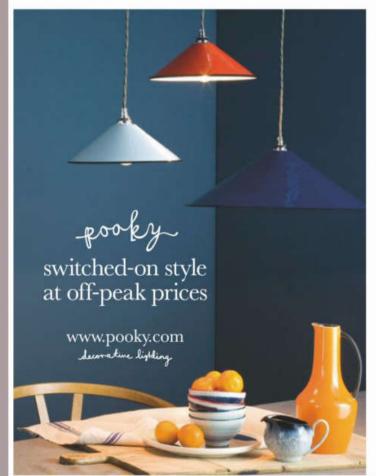






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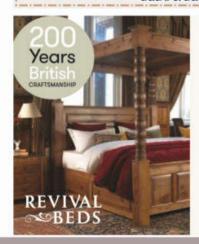
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## 'I LOVE THE WILD AND UNSPOILT BEAUTY OF SADDELL BAY'

## Director of the Landmark Trust, Dr Anna Keay

s a child I remember being told that Argyll, where I grew up, has a longer coastline than France. But I only really believed it when I first drove the length of the Kintyre peninsula to Saddell Bay. Last year I did it in June, when



the verges were dazzling purple and green with willowherb. As the radio signal died, I listened to Bridge over Troubled Water on a loop while the miles skimmed past. That it should be possible to drive three hours south-west of Inveraray and still be on land seems absurd, but so it is. What you find when the road finally runs out is a sublime end-of-the-world place. And here is the glittering, dappled realm of Saddell.

This little estate was once part of the lands of a Cistercian Abbey. When the monks finally petered out in the late Middle Ages, it was granted to the Bishop of Argyll in the hope that he would help pacify this lawless fiefdom of the Lords of the Isles. Still standing proud on the water's edge is Saddell Castle, the stronghold he built in 1508, with its incomparable view across Kilbrannan Sound to the Isle of Arran. The castle stands right on the beach, with fine views from every window on each of its four floors. Best of all is the battlemented wall-walk around its roof. When the Landmark Trust took it on, large trees were growing from the parapets and

all the windows had gone. Over the centuries, a series of other buildings joined the castle - two whitewashed, sash-windowed houses, a grand Georgian mansion and a tiny tin cottage.

Shore Cottage stands on a rocky point among trees that grow right down to the sea. Imaginative in design as well as situation, the door from the sitting room leads directly on to the foreshore. All these properties were in a ragged or ruinous condition when the Trust bought the estate in 1978 but after careful restoration, and ever since, they have been available to rent for holidaving. The castle, which sleeps eight, is perfect for Christmas getaways. You can follow the Kintyre Way around the stunning peninsula and enjoy exploring its wealth of hidden coves and deserted beaches.

I seldom go to Argyll in high summer now, although I almost always make it for Christmas. Of my 40 Christmases to date, only two have ever been spent anywhere else. At this time of year, the daylight lasts barely six hours and the winter sun streaks low across the sound. When night falls, you can pile on all your jerseys and clamber out on to the castle roof to marvel at the glittering firmament and hope for a glimpse of the northern lights.

To book Saddell Castle, Shore Cottage or any other Landmark Trust property, visit landmarktrust.org.uk or call 01628 825925.

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